



123359155



*Thomas Fisher
Rare Book Library*

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

51512

225

UTR

1920

1st

VIOLA =
WBC only

THE HELPING HAND

1849-1912

MILLS AND BOON'S NEW NOVELS

BRODIE AND THE DEEP SEA	I. A. R. Wylie
ISLAND TALES	Jack London
A SPANISH VENDETTA	Louise Gerard
A VARIETY ENTERTAINMENT	Sophie Cole
THE EXTRA LADY	Horace W. C. Newte
THE CORAL PALACE	Beatrice Grimshaw
THE HELPING HAND	Robert Barr
THE FOOL OF FORTUNE	E. C. Buley
THE FLY IN THE BOTTLE	Maud Mallet
THE TRUMPET IN THE DUST	Constance Holme
JOHN FITZHENRY	Ella MacMahon
WICKED	Arthur Applin
THE WHITE HEN	Phyllis Campbell
THE HOOFSIDE	Anthony Carlyle
THE SEA BRIDE	Don Ames Williams

THE HELPING HAND

AND OTHER STORIES

By

ROBERT BARR

Author of

“Tales of Two Continents ”

MILLS & BOON, LIMITED


49 RUPERT STREET

LONDON, W. 1

Published 1920

CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE HELPING HAND	7
THE SCIENTIST AND THE SHOP-GIRL	39
AN INTERNATIONAL ARRANGEMENT	65
THE SAD STORY OF THE SECOND BROTHER	84
THE KING AND THE SMITH	115
THE BANK MANAGER	132
DOROTHY OF THE MILL	162
THE LABOUR LEADER	185
THE WATERMEAD AFFAIR	208



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2024 with funding from
University of Toronto

The Helping Hand

The Writers of these letters.

GERALD SEFTON, of the Inner Temple, London, is a barrister, aged forty-seven, who has never had a brief. A reserved man, with rather a handsome, smooth-shaven face and iron-grey hair, he is something of a recluse, who, having failed at law, has become chief reviewer of the *Weekly Acropolis*. He occasionally contributes charming, daintily written articles to the *Spectator*. He is a trifle dilettante in his tastes, with nothing of the modern spirit of money-making about him. In his younger days he issued a thin book of verse, which few people read, and nobody bought, but he is fortunate enough to possess a private income, and thus his failures in law and literature are not considered of vital importance.

The enervating qualities of the Inner Temple air having exercised a deleterious influence upon his health, he is sent one summer by his physician to Cromer, to take advantage of the bracing atmosphere of the East Coast, but Sefton, disliking the bustle of this popular resort, secures simple quarters at Overstrand, two miles away, and there becomes acquainted with Miss Nancy Blair, of Norwich, a Church School teacher, who is also in need of rest and quiet. Gerald, although hitherto nothing of a

lady's man, is greatly impressed by Nancy's beauty, freshness and charm. They spend much of their time together, on the sands, and along the breezy downs by the sea coast, agreeing to write to one another when he is once more in London, and she in Norwich.

NANCY BLAIR is a teacher in the Church Schools of Norwich, aged twenty-two. She is a nice, affectionate girl, with rather more than the ordinary share of beauty. Miss Blair is well read in the current literature of the day, silently adores a successful author, and cherishes secret literary ambitions of her own. She loathes her environment, and hates the dull routine of school work, dreaming of accomplishing something with her pen that will bring fame to satisfy her aspirations, and money to release her from thralldom. She has never met a man like Gerald Sefton before, and he fascinates her, yet her joy in the new acquaintance is alloyed by his persistent pessimism. He possesses the advantage of a personal acquaintance with many noted men whom she reveres, yet seems indifferent to his good fortune, and sometimes even speaks slightly of her most venerated idols. This disquiets her, and mentally she fights against disillusionment, as a doubting monk struggles for the preservation of his faith. Nevertheless, although Sefton may speak disparagingly of individuals, she realizes how just is his estimate of their work, and comes to the conclusion that he allows no personal predilection to dilute the critical purity of his criticism. Sefton confesses himself, with mild bitterness, to be a literary failure, but she somehow arrives at the belief that his youthful fervour, although dulled by lack of

success, is nevertheless not extinguished. Her admiration for him is almost unlimited, and her liking grows with the growth of their friendship.

JAMES DUNKIRK is a stalwart, well-set-up youth of twenty-four, whom Miss Blair refers to as "Jimmy," or "The Boy." They have been at school together, and for two years young Dunkirk has occupied a position as reporter on the *Norwich Bulletin*, a daily evening paper. This position has enabled him to make the acquaintance of Members of Parliament and other important personages. Although Gerald Sefton may admit that he is a literary failure, no such false modesty conceals Jimmy's intellectual gifts from his friends. He proclaims with a confidence as overwhelming as a steam roller, that if ever the Editorship of *The Times* is offered to him, he will show London what up-to-date journalism really is. Two years' experience convince him that Norwich is much too small for a man of his capacity, and he resolves to adventure his talents upon the London press, but he concludes that it would be selfish on his part to devote those talents to a single newspaper which by rights should be used in the service of Great Britain, therefore he determines upon a political career, and towards this end obtains a letter of introduction from a local Member of Parliament to Mr. Fletcher, a very unimportant official in the Foreign Office, who occasionally has some minor places to bestow; a few rungs at the foot of the ladder, as one might say. In the exultation at having taken the first step towards a premiership, the energetic and enthusiastic Jimmy got upon his bicycle, and rode to Overstrand, that he might

acquaint his admired friend, Miss Blair, with his progress, and also to bid her good-bye, as he had already telegraphed the Foreign Office that he would arrive in London within the week. "Do it now" was ever Jimmy's motto, and he pronounced the "now" with an emphasis that suggested capital letters. Jimmy found two persons instead of one. The pair were seated on the sands, and the sad sea waves played a soothing accompaniment to the modulated tones of Gerald Sefton, while Nancy listened enthralled. The meeting both surprised and bewildered Nancy Blair, who was a girl inexperienced in the ways of men, young or old. Jimmy and she had been friends from childhood, yet on no other occasion had she ever seen him act so like a loud-mouthed braggart. One would think, to hear him, that the Foreign Office was something to be taken away in a jug, or drunk on the premises, as best pleased Jimmy Dunkirk. The older man said nothing, but his very silence was electrical with contempt, and his nonchalant attitude seemed to whisper "Bounder!" Nancy was amazed to find that she thought Sefton the more aggressive of the two, in spite of the fact that he had spoken no word, and made no sign during the brief episode that was ended by Jimmy's storming off towards Norwich on his scarcely rested cycle. The next thing she knew, she was hotly defending the lad, with burning cheeks as she realized he had not been attacked. Sefton bowed his head in acceptance of all she said, and then calmly continued his exposition of George Meredith's aims. James Dunkirk went to London, applied three times to the Foreign Office, and was received on the first occasion in a very non-committal manner by Mr. Fletcher, and finally it dawned

upon Jimmy that the Foreign Office had all the talent it could use at that particular time. After several weeks had passed, he managed to secure an odd-job position, without salary (payment by space), on the reportorial staff of the *Daily Spur*. By this time young Mr. Dunkirk had become chastened, and so condescended to write to Nancy Blair. The correspondence that follows covers the space of two years.

James Dunkirk to Nancy Blair.

I have been wanting to write to you every day since I came to London. You will say at once, "Why didn't you, then? You knew my address and I didn't know yours." It would be quite easy for me to make polite excuses and say that I have been so busy since reaching London, so absorbed in my new duties, that there was no time for writing, but, Nancy, I will be quite honest with you. I have been angry with you ever since I cycled away from Overstrand that day, but the anger is becoming less and less as time goes on, and I would give anything at this moment to receive a letter from you. The day I cycled from Norwich to Overstrand, I had been thinking all the way of what a nice afternoon I should have with you, telling you my plans and all the rest of it, and then to find you sprawling on the sands with that superior beast, who looked as if nobody else had a right to exist on the earth except himself, was a bit thick!! He is the sort of Johnny I never take notice of, and I didn't pay any attention to him then. You can tell by the cut of his clothes that he doesn't amount to anything. But it was you, Nancy, you who made me angry.

You had your eyes turned up at him with such a look of admiration in your face, that all you needed was to fold your palms together, with hands in an attitude of prayer, to be a perfect picture of devotion. One would think you imagined him to be a carved saint in Norwich Cathedral, and here was I, going away from home, perhaps for ever, and just yearning for a long, intimate talk with you, and really there are occasions when a fellow needs a little encouragement from an old friend—and then to find that swine lounging there—Oh, Nancy, I feel my anger rising again so that I can't bear to write about my disappointment. Who is that sneering toff anyhow? Some London tripper up for the day?

Nancy Blair to James Dunkirk.

What a perfectly heavenly letter to send to a girl! My dear Mr. James Dunkirk, your wondrous self-conceit increased until Norwich became too small for you, and now that you have gone to London it promises to become unbearable. *You* wished to enjoy a pleasant afternoon, *you* desired to explain *your* plans, *you* were leaving Norwich, *you* were going to London, and even now, after having had time to think over your conduct, you apply terms of rancour to a gentleman whose position in the world of letters a rude lad like you can neither appreciate nor emulate. It never seems to have crossed your mind that *I* might wish for a pleasant afternoon, and that *I* might be hurt when it was spoiled by your rude and boisterous conduct. It may come upon you as a stupefying surprise that so insignificant a creature as myself

may have plans of my own, which I should like to discuss with a true friend, whose mind was not wholly absorbed with his own achievements.

The "toff," as you call him, is Mr. Gerald Sefton, of the Inner Temple, who is a noted writer. His articles have appeared in all the best periodicals of London; he is acknowledged, by those who are able to judge, as one of the leading literary critics of the day, who, in spite of his high position in the world of letters, can hardly ever be induced to speak of himself or his work, and who talks to me without a hint of condescension. He is a man of such gentleness and courtesy that not even a word of disparagement crossed his lips regarding a certain visitor who swooped down upon me on the beach of Overstrand. For any further information touching his position I refer you to a red volume entitled *Who's Who*, and until your name appears in that book, it might be more becoming of you to treat with respect the men of distinction whose works find a record on its pages.

James Dunkirk to Nancy Blair.

I am a beast, a cad, a swine, and everything else that I called the estimable elderly gentleman. I am neither in *Who's Who* nor in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, bulky as these volumes are. I am a blighter and a bounder and a boor from the back settlements, but I *did* think I was a friend of Nancy Blair.

Oh, Nan, I am more different kinds of a fool than even you ever thought me. Norwich is my size: I've no right in this big town. Nan, I'm as lonely as a little girl driving home the cows in the

dark. There's not a soul of all these thousands, who pass me that has a friendly nod or a kindly glance for me. Of course, I shouldn't mind that and never thought I would, but a desert island in the Pacific would be a place of garrulous hilarity and comradeship, compared with London to a stranger. Nan, I'm not getting on, in spite of my brag. The situations here all seem to be filled, and no one has any use for me. The one bright spot in the darkness was a letter I received yesterday from the Editor of the *Norwich Bulletin*. He wants me to come back, but I'll never go back. I'll take the King's shilling first. There, you see, Nan, it is just as you say: still talking of myself, in adversity as well as in prosperity. I am an incorrigible egotist, am I not? Oh, Nan, I wish I was in the Cathedral for ten minutes, listening to the organ and looking across at you. Forgive my bumptiousness, dear Nan. God bless you, and good-bye.

Nancy Blair to James Dunkirk.

Dear Jimmy,—

What a censorious cat I have been, and yet, after all, it is a tribute to your powers. I never imagined you unsuccessful, nor could I picture you depressed or lonesome. I fancied you always the conquering hero, carrying everything before you, in London, as in Norwich. Dear, dear Jimmy, it is I who should crave your forgiveness. Do write me a long and friendly letter, all, all, *all* about yourself, and what you have done since you reached London, and in return I'll tell you a great secret. Do cheer up, Jimmy, your letter made me cry, and I

have been deeply contrite ever since. You have no idea how tame Norwich seems with you away. I don't wonder the Editor wished you to come back. There is another person in Norwich wishes the same thing, and yet is proud that you do not retreat under fire. The millionaire's pound is worth twenty of the King's shillings, and you will soon have pounds enough when the millionaires learn your value, so never think of his gracious Majesty's ungracious shilling again. Write me a long letter, Jimmy, *all* about yourself.

James Dunkirk to Nancy Blair.

Oh dear, sweet, kindly Nan. Your beautiful letter lifted a weight of lead from my shoulders. It was like hearing you talk once more. I wonder when I shall listen to your voice again. Well, Nan, that letter of introduction from the Member of Parliament to Fletcher of the Foreign Office wasn't worth the paper it was written on. I called there, and was received by the passive Fletcher, who seemed to have some trouble in remembering who the writer of it was, and as for who the deuce I might be, he quite evidently did not care a brass farthing, but he was icily polite, took my name and address, bowed me out, saying that if any vacancy occurred he would bear me in mind. All rotten talk; insincere as a leader in the *Daily Spur*. I called at the Foreign Office several times, but never got to see him again. Always the same message came down to me—I should be communicated with in due course. I soon came to understand that this didn't mean anything; then I began to bustle about, trying to do something in my own profession

of journalism. All those weary, ineffectual days of search for work I never got even the promise of employment. I wrote to our Member of Parliament, not asking him to do anything more for me, but telling him how useless the letter to the Foreign Office had been, and saying I was determined to give up a career in that direction, and go back to my old trade of newspaper writing. He answered in most genial fashion; said that old Fletcher was rather stodgy, but was not so insincere as I thought. He would stir him up, he said, but meanwhile, here was a letter to the Editor of the *Daily Spur*. He advised me that if the Editor received me, I should state with lightning rapidity whatever I wanted, and warned me that in this instance I should not have to complain of any unnecessary politeness on the Editor's part, as was the case with old Fletcher of the Foreign Office.

Since writing to you the Editor did receive me. His smooth-shaved face seems to be carved out of one of those huge flint stones we use in Norfolk for building purposes. His eyes go through you like two Mauser bullets, which do not kill outright, but paralyze. He doesn't speak, he barks, and I barked back. It was like the meeting of a bulldog and a poodle. Nothing conceited about that, is there, Nan? Well, to make a long story short, I am down now as an extra man on the reportorial staff: that is to say, if there is any odd job no one else is available for, they toss it to me. Space work, they call it here, which means that I write a column on a subject, and the Editor cuts it down to four lines, and pays me for three. I'm not going to get many of the millionaire's pounds on this job, but then, you see, Nan, my foot is on the first rung of

the ladder. If a vacancy occurs on the regular staff (the *Spur* is continually flinging men into the street), I get my chance. There is also the gambling throw of my running against some sensational, first-class item of news that no one else has obtained. I have bucked up considerably since this has happened. I attribute my bucking up to your perfectly delightful letter. Now, Nan, what's the secret?

Gerald Sefton to Nancy Blair.

In an Eastern tale I read sometime, somewhere, an account of a joyous prisoner. We usually associate incarceration with sorrow, but in this case the captive possessed an enviable power. In his case it was true that stone walls do not a prison make, for at his will the walls dissolved and disappeared, and in their place came any scene he chose to conjure up; any scene, that is to say, with which in his previous life he had been acquainted. It was not a picture, you understand, dear Miss Blair, like our modern, quivering cinematograph exhibitions, but the real thing. His body, I take it, was still within the stone walls of his prison, but his spirit roamed wherever his body and spirit had roamed together in bygone years. These Eastern stories are all symbolical, and I suppose this was intended to paint the pleasures of recollection and imagination; to give form and movement and colour to the phrase: "My mind to me a kingdom is."

In some respects I am like the joyous prisoner, and at times the walls of the Temple disappear, or, if it does not sound impious, I might say, the

veil of the Temple is rent, and looking through, I see a great stretch of sand, all untenanted except by two people. The continuous, gentle murmur of the light summer waves is a harmony as if some one were dreamily playing very quietly upon the organ in the Cathedral which you love, and of which you spoke so affectionately, so understandingly, and so charmingly, that I fancy every stone in its structure is endeared to you. Do you know, there is nothing I am prouder of than the fact that I caused a demure, silent little person to give me the result of her observations of the great and humble connected with the Cathedral. I flatter myself no one else ever heard you talk like that. Your position as a teacher in a Church school, your sweet devoutness, your unquestioning belief that I so much envy, have given you exceptional facilities for observation, and there is, to my mind, a delicious humour in the thought that some of those pompous persons little dreamt they were being weighed and estimated by a mind so clear-sighted as yours. The literary value of what you told me is shown by the fact that the more I think of these recitals the more vivid they appear to me. Quite unconsciously, as I take it, you drew character with a touch of unvarying truth, which has made those personalities live in my mind, as if I myself were acquainted with them. Dear Miss Blair, I should be the last person to induce a fellow-creature to adventure on the muddy sea of literature.

As I have confessed to you, what I have never confessed to any one else, the practice of letters has been to me at once a delight and a disappointment. I should advise you strongly not to quit the profession which, alas! you find so irksome, yet

I think if you set down on paper a collection of those character studies and incidents which you related to me, you would experience the happiness of creative work, and achieve, perhaps, a slight addition to your income, for I regret to say that the better the work is, the less money it brings in these modern days of limericks and prize-packets, by which means the English people are bribed to read.

Since the days of Anthony Trollope, a writer too much neglected at the present moment, no person has given us adequate pictures of clerical life. No one has been able, if I may so put it, to bring into the bustling market-place of literature, the vague aroma of the cathedral, the cloisters and the close.

Pray ponder on my suggestion, dear Miss Blair, and if you send the result to me, I shall consider myself honoured, and will guarantee to place the articles or stories where they will meet an appreciative audience.

I take the liberty of sending with this a parcel of the most modern novels. Do not hesitate to accept them, because most of them bear the stamp of "6/-" in blatant bold type upon the outer paper cover. They cost me nothing, but are sent in for review. In my opinion they are mostly trash, but they are what the people are reading nowadays, and there are at least three of the best-selling authors among the heap. In the mass may pass unnoticed a thin book of less than fifty pages, looking very anæmic beside the sturdy bulk of the others. I am rather disquieted at finding myself sending this little volume of verse on a journey. I have not looked at the book or given away a copy for more than twenty years. You will see that it

was issued anonymously, and there is no need to add that it never sold. Youth to youth. If my voice speaks to you in any of these lines, remember that voice belongs to one only a few years older than yourself. I find myself wishing, with a sigh, that this youth had met Miss Nancy Blair on the sands of Norfolk. Forgive the undying vanity of man that this trifle is taken from its dusty closet in London, and sent to the fair city of Norwich:

Nancy Blair to Gerald Sefton.

You cannot imagine how your letter has elated and inspired me, and I can never thank you enough, not for the huge parcel of modern books, but for the thin little volume that has appealed to me so strangely that at times I have to lay it down until I recover control of myself, and can go on with the reading and re-reading.

The whole book appeals to me so intimately ; so strangely. . . . That poem on page 27 seems as if—as if—I don't know how to put it—as if the writer *had* met me on the sands ; but I cannot write coherently about this little book, which you do wrong to disparage. Will you be shocked if I tell you I cannot bring myself, after reading its pages, to open any of the “ best-sellers,” and I have given the set to a little literary club of which I am a member. The “ best-sellers ” have been received with joy, so that must be the reward of your generosity.

Your kind letter encourages me to do what I have long wished to do, but had not the courage. Some weeks ago I finished a novel of clerical life. It has been typed in duplicate, and I send with this one of the copies. This impetuous action on

my part ; this quick response to your kind invitation, must not be held to bind you to anything. Do not read a page more than you wish to. If you flatter me by criticizing what I have written, I beg that your comments shall be unsparing.

Nancy Blair to James Dunkirk.

The great secret, Jimmy, is that I have written a novel. I am anxious for your opinion of it, so I send with this one of the typed copies. Tell me honestly, Jimmy, what you think of it. I don't believe I should have ventured to send it to any one, had it not been for the kind encouragement given me by that great critic, Mr. Gerald Sefton. The same post that brings this to you takes the other copy to him, so imagine the pride of a humble Norwich girl with two London men reading her effort at the same time. The town of Norden in the novel you will at once recognize as your own beloved Norwich, if the whirl of London has not so enveloped you that you despise our ancient city. I think, too, you will recognize some of the characters, and, Jimmy, you must respect the secret, for if the novel is ever published, it will be published anonymously. And now you are no friend of mine if you do not tell me quite truthfully what you think of it.

Gerald Sefton to Nancy Blair.

I have read your novel with that quiet enjoyment which such excellent work always affords me. Nothing like it has been issued since the days of Trollope, and there is throughout the book a gentle feminine touch, and a quaint delicious

humour that is absent from his pages. With your permission I will make certain verbal changes, none of them of any great moment, but as you know, I am rather a stickler for the right word, and in some instances I think I can be of assistance. Also I advise you to put Chapter XV somewhere before Chapter IX, because the reader should have in his possession some of the information you give in the later chapter before he reads the earlier. As you ignore plot, this transfer can be made without the least derangement of the book.

I shall at once see my friend Mr. Kent, of Kent & Allen, and make arrangements for the publishing. If I were you, I should not attempt to serialize, because your quite proper repression of all sensationalism deprives your chapter ends of those "curtains," if I may use a theatrical phrase, which are so dear to the heart of the modern editor. Kent & Allen are publishers who deal only in *belles lettres*, and their name on your title-page is, I assure you, of value among the discerning. You must not be disappointed that you are not likely to be offered any advance payment, but with your next book I am sure the case will be different.

Before doing anything definite, I shall await your note of approval or the reverse of my suggestions.

James Dunkirk to Nancy Blair.

Oh, I say, Nance, this is bally rot! I went to sleep seventeen times trying to read your stuff. What the old Harry makes you think that any civilized, intelligent person has the least interest in Norwich, or the old fogies that people it? Great heavens, girl, Norwich is in a backwater; it is as

enterprising as Pompeii. Dear Nance, I am so glad you sent me this because a first novel is important. If you attempt to publish a book which no one on earth will want to read, why, you class yourself with the incompetent, like that man Sefton. I've been looking up his record, and he doesn't amount to anything. I don't believe he makes a hundred pounds a year by his writings, and if he hadn't a private income, he'd be in the poorhouse. He is a failure as a barrister, and a failure as a literary man. Why, Fleet Street is full of such driftwood as he.

Now, Nancy, I'll tell you what I'm going to do for you. I have got together (and it took some searching round to find complete sets) back numbers of the *Daily Spur*, which has a million circulation. You read the stories of Hungerford Stiles. I've got you three of them, and send them by parcel post with this. Hungerford Stiles is the best paid man connected with the *Daily Spur*, and it would open your eyes to learn how much they give special writers. That's what I'm qualifying for. A man who knows his subject can make more money than a bank can hold when he catches on. You read "Marred by Marriage," also "Tracked by Blood," and Stiles' latest one, which is *Wedded at Midnight*." I tell you, Nan, it's a ripper! This man just catches the reader by the hair of his head, and jerks him through a chapter, like a cowboy on the gallop lassoing an Indian, and he hangs you over a cliff and leaves you breathless till next morning's paper comes out.

Then, again, Hungerford Stiles is up-to-date. He runs into his yarns all the most modern inventions, wireless telegraphy, picture making by long

distance electricity, and if there is in the news columns some great mystery in Paris or Berlin or America or London, why he's got the thing worked up into a story before two weeks, and reaches the climax and the explanation before the Courts have got down to trying the real criminal. They tell me this man has a palace in Surrey, and that the money he makes in a year causes the salary of the Chancellor of the Exchequer to look like a Scotchman's contribution to charity. That's because he's alive and has got brains.

What in the name of Rothschild does one want to write for if not to make money? I tell you, Nance, that that book of yours won't sell a copy. You couldn't stand on the street corners and *give* it away. Chuck it, Nan, chuck it, and be the same sensible girl you always were. I can help you here like smoke. I'm getting acquainted with the fellows and can work in notices about you in a whole lot of papers. There's the secret of progress: first write what the public wants, not the half-dozen incompetent nincompoops who blather about literature, and couldn't write up the story of a dog-fight, but the great breathing, living, palpitating public that are in the line of modern progress. You burn this trash, and write a hair-raiser. I want to see you do justice to yourself, Nance.

Nancy Blair to James Dunkirk.

Many thanks for the newspapers, and for your offers of assistance. I shall probably read one of Mr. Hungerford Stiles' stories; perhaps the one you designate as a "ripper," although why you omit the Jack, I don't know. When I write a

story such as you outline, I shall certainly call upon you for assistance.

Gerald Sefton to Nancy Blair.

I enclose the first batch of reviews of your new book. You will notice that they are invariably favourable, and some of them from our very best journals are as appreciative as even I could wish. Mr. Kent, of Kent & Allen, informs me that the book has not begun to move yet, but that is always to be expected. And now, if I may turn from literature. . . . I regret to say that my literary work brings me in but a small amount each year, and my reward is merely the gratification. . . . Fortunately, however, from a purely commercial source I receive on an average upwards of two thousand pounds a year. I have always saved money, and I think I can assure you of comfort. . . . So, Nancy, will you consent to marry an old fogey?

Nancy Blair to Gerald Sefton.

. . . I refuse to marry an old fogey, but I shall marry you if you want me. . . .

James Dunkirk to Nancy Blair.

Hip hurrah! Slap bang! Here we are again! Nan, congratulate me. The greatest thing in the world has happened. I have shown London what a Norfolk lad amounts to. Suffering Southwold, I've made them sit up and take notice! It all came about in the most marvellous way. Have you

been reading in the papers of the Russian Treaty, and do you know that Lord Sapton has been secretly conducting the negotiations? Well, my girl, listen to this. Lord Sapton arrived at Paris from St. Petersburg, with practically all the big men in the reportorial line trying to get a word with him. The *Daily Spur* sent six of its very cleverest special writers; two to haunt the British Legation at Paris, where Lord Sapton was stopping; the others to watch the boat at Dover and Calais, and all the usual sort of thing. The British Government was determined that nothing should leak out. The *Daily Spur* office was in a turmoil. Of course I was on the outskirts: no one consulted me. This was a big thing for big men, and even with a dozen or more at his disposal, our grim, flint-faced editor evidently felt certain he would not get anything worth publishing.

This made the Editor so unbearable that those of us who had no look-in on the Paris job broke for cover. It is editors such as he that drive men on the reportorial staff to drink. He's a blue terror, Nance, but he *does* know his business.

"Thus it came about that one afternoon I returned early to my humble diggings, and there I found a letter awaiting me. It proved to be from old Fletcher of the Foreign Office, who, with admirable brevity, requested me to call upon him as soon as I received his communication, yet when Fletcher, at our first interview, said he would write if anything turned up, I thought him a humbug. I must be more charitable in the judgment of my fellow-creatures hereafter.

"I fancied our Member of Parliament had been stirring him up, as he had promised to do, but such

was not the case. Fletcher asked me coldly if I had succeeded in finding anything to do, and thinking that perhaps the office of Foreign Secretary was about to become vacant, I replied that I was still looking for a permanent job. He inquired if I had made any friends in London, and when I answered I didn't have a friend in the world, except at Norwich, which was perfectly true, he seemed pleased. Next, to my amazement, he outlined the situation in Paris: the unfortunate Lord Sapton was practically a prisoner in the British Legation, surrounded by the chief newspaper men of the world, calling for his blood, just as if he had been an inhabitant of Peking at the time of the Boxer trouble. Of course, I knew all this from the other side of the hedge, as one might say, but although you think I talk too much, there are times when I know enough to keep my head shut, so I let old Fletcher ramble on without interruption, and soon learned what he wanted of me. The British Government desired to send some secret despatches across the Channel. All the regular messengers of the Foreign Office being well known, and being spied upon by the reporters, it became desirable to send these secret despatches to Paris in the custody of some inane, commonplace individual, who would look so much like a cheap clerk that he never would be suspected by the journalists of any connection with the Foreign Office. The crafty Fletcher, glancing again at my letter of introduction, which he actually kept on file, suggested that as I had been a member of the staff of the *Norwich Bulletin*, I should, if spoken to in Paris by any of the journalists, pretend to have been sent over by the *Bulletin* to interview Lord Sapton.

I thought at the time old Fletcher was rather over-estimating the enterprise of the *Bulletin*, for I never would have seen Paris if I had depended on the editor of that excellent journal.

“ Well, I went across on the night boat, and I tell you, Nance, Paris on a summer morning, to a fellow who sees it for the first time, has got Norwich beaten to a frazzle, as an American member of the *Spur* staff expresses himself.

Nan, in some unaccountable way you have reached the conclusion that I am a conceited chap, but you ought to meet Lord Sapton, for he thinks he’s the whole thing, and to hear him talk about himself, you’d imagine the Russian and the British Governments are merely his assistants. I fancy that during the week he was immured in the British Legation, he had talked to a standstill—my American friend again—every member of the Legation, from the Ambassador down to the hall-porter, who looks ever so much more dignified than the Ambassador himself. I suspect that all the sane men in the place have been avoiding Lord Sapton, quite bored by the unceasing recital of his achievements, and so his lordship welcomed with avidity a new listener. Lord, what reams the reporters would write if they once got within sound of his voice ! I don’t wonder at the anxiety of the Foreign Office to keep his garrulous lordship under cover. It amazes me to meet with the kind of men the British Government employs to carry out the most delicate negotiations. Now, if these had been entrusted to me—but there, you’ll be saying again that I am conceited if I keep on.

“ Before I had been with Lord Sapton an hour, I was in possession of the most wonderful stories :—

all Lord Sapton's achievements in Russia, how they tried to baffle him, and how he circumvented them, and so on, until the moment of his present triumph. At last he sealed up his despatches, gave them to me, and I was in London by next morning, waiting for old Fletcher when he arrived at the Foreign Office. He asked if I had been troubled by the reporters, and I told him quite truly I hadn't seen one of them, nor spoken to any one in Paris except the hall-porter and Lord Sapton. Fletcher then examined the seals of the despatches I handed to him with more minuteness than was complimentary to my honesty, and, satisfying himself that they had not been tampered with, he caused me to write out an account of my expenses on a printed form, and sign it, whereupon these were paid, together with a handsome recompense for my two nights and a day. Then he dismissed me, and I realized my career with the Foreign Office was at an end.

"The Editor of the *Daily Spur* reaches his desk at noon, and leaves it for lunch at one o'clock. During that hour he is at his work, and towards one o'clock it is positively unsafe for an ordinary person to approach him. By twelve o'clock I had the article written which chronicled Lord Sapton's achievements. By ten minutes to one I was in the Editor's office, who had settled the fate of the staff for the day. He attacked me (verbally, of course) the moment he saw me. What the burning fiery furnace did I mean by coming in at this hour? Where in perdition had I been yesterday? Did I adjective well think that the *Spur* office was an A.B.C. shop, where I could drop in whenever it pleased me?

“‘Get out, you sweep!’ he roared, ‘and never show your ugly mug in this building again.’

“Now, considering that for two weeks I had not had a single assignment, I considered this reception unkind.

“‘I am awfully sorry,’ I said mildly, ‘but yesterday was my busy day. I spent it in Paris, conversing with Lord Sapton, and I couldn’t come earlier to-day because I was engaged in writing out the interview.’

“‘WHAT!’ he shouted in a tone that made the printing presses downstairs tremble. ‘Give me the copy.’

“‘I am going to take it over to the opposition rag. I’ve just received my dismissal from the *Spur*.’

“‘Sit down; don’t be a fool!’ he barked. ‘How did you get to see Lord Sapton?’

“‘Night before last I carried despatches to him from the Foreign Office. Last night I came back with his despatches to the Foreign Office. The Member of Parliament who gave me an introduction to you, presented me before that with a letter of introduction to Fletcher of the Foreign Office. Fletcher asked me to be his messenger *pro tem*. because the reporters were camping on the trail of all the regular messengers. I was sent because I was unknown, and I accomplished what the Foreign Office gave me to do. I also eluded all your high-priced swells of the fountain-pen, and here I am before their chief, the biggest fool of the lot, who hasn’t the sense to speak civilly to the man that’s got the stuff.’

“The Editor actually grinned: it was an appalling sight.

“ ‘How much do you want for it?’ he said.

“ ‘I want two hundred and fifty pounds down for the interview, and a contract with you for a year as reporter at five pounds a week.’

“ ‘All right,’ he snapped, ‘but I must read and approve the article first.’

“ ‘Approve nothing!’ said I, again quoting my American friend. ‘Do you think when I hold a hand of trumps I’m going to show it to you, and allow you to select what cards you please? Put up, or shut up, as they say out west.’

“ Again he grinned, dashed off an order for two hundred and fifty pounds, and wrote a contract in three lines, giving me the salary I demanded for a year, and these documents he shoved over to me, while I passed the manuscript to him.

“ ‘If the goods aren’t up to the cheek you have given me,’ he cried savagely, ‘I’ll break your neck down these stairs.’

“ ‘All right,’ said I. ‘I’ll sit here till you’ve finished my copy, and then if you feel like tackling, we’ll see whose neck will be broken downstairs.’

“ Not another word was spoken till he came to the last line. Then he growled savagely: ‘You’re a good man, Dunkirk. Pleased to have met you. The article will appear in to-morrow’s paper, in the leading news column, and it will prove a bomb-shell, or I’m a Dutchman.’

“ I left the office after midnight; we have been guarding this article as if it were a ton of gold. I have been on the go three nights without a wink, and am very sleepy but very happy. I had to let you know of my good luck before I turned in, so pardon any incoherencies and any brag you find in this hurried but lengthy scrawl.”

James Dunkirk to Nancy Blair.

Our two letters passed each other somewhere on the road between here and Norwich. I admit at once, dear Nancy, that your short note took me by surprise, and I don't quite know what to say. I generally say the wrong thing in a crisis, don't I, Nancy; as, for instance, on the beach at Overstrand. I am sorry that I ever said anything against Mr. Sefton, as he is going to be your husband, but all I wrote concerning him I unreservedly withdraw. Dear Nancy, you certainly deserve to be happy. There is no girl in the world so good as you are. From all I can learn, every one praises Mr. Sefton. He is a gentleman and a scholar, and I am sure you will excuse the brotherly interest in you that caused me to make inquiries. I am too hasty at forming opinions about persons, and must amend that fault. There is the Editor of the *Spur*, for instance, of whom I have written to you most unjustifiably. He is an exceedingly competent man, and has been kind to me throughout, although his abrupt manner misleads people in their estimate of him. I am just in from a long talk with him, and he quite agrees with me that nothing brings a man's name so to the front as war correspondence. If the Amir does not back down, we are going to have trouble in Afghanistan sure, as my American friend says. I have asked the Editor to let me go with the troops, and he consented at once. He seems to believe in me, and I am lucky in my profession, anyhow. As I may have to go at a moment's notice, all depending on the news from the frontier, this may be my good-bye,

so God bless you, Nancy dear. Accept congratulations and best wishes from your sincere friend.

Nancy Blair to James Dunkirk.

Dear Jimmy,—

Why on earth are you so foolish as to go to Afghanistan. I think you would do much better to remain in London, for then what you wrote would appear day by day, and I am sure that is the way to build up a reputation. It takes so long for any communication to come from Afghanistan, but then, I suppose you'll be telegraphing.

Jimmy, that was a very nice letter you wrote me, and somehow it turned my thoughts to myself in a way that made me feel unaccountably sad, although I know you did not intend your words to have that effect. You see, Jimmy, I had not been thinking so much about my own happiness as of the possibility that I might fail to make happy a man of the genius of Gerald Sefton. After all, the difference in our positions is very great. He has moved in the best and most highly cultured society of London, while I am a mere country girl. Now that my book has failed so lamentably, I am a very humble and humiliated person, despite the nice things that were said about it. Gerald insists I should write another, but I seem to have nothing more to write about. Indeed, I have been practising on quite a different sort of story, and I fear I should shrink from letting Gerald see it. You said in one of your letters that I had never read those three novels with the appalling titles, by Hungerford Stiles. You are mistaken in that: I read each one of them, and I am almost ashamed

to confess that I see in them traces of great power and really a most terse command of the English language. The grip that this writer gets on your attention is something amazing, and absurd as his plots undoubtedly are, he, for the moment, obliterates the actual world, and holds you breathless until you come to "To be continued." I should not dare to write like this to Gerald. It seems like treason to him, and yet is it honest that I should conceal from him my real opinions in the matter? I have just decided that it is not, and am determined to forward to him the three stories, and tell him exactly what I think of them. My mind must be on a much lower level than I flattered myself it was. I hope Gerald will not despise me when he knows that I admire Hungerford Stiles, but I could not bear to have him marry me under false pretences, and the worst of it is, Jimmy, that I've nearly finished a Hungerford Stiles novel myself, only a trifle more lurid than anything he has yet descended to.

Gerald Sefton to Nancy Blair.

I have allowed several days to elapse before attempting any reply to yours of the 12th inst. I felt that I needed time to reconsider my estimate of that intellect which I thought I knew so well. The stories of a writer like Hungerford Stiles are quite beneath the contempt of any intelligent person. They are useful only to mark the lowest depths of degradation into which popular British fiction has sunk. I learn with the gravest apprehension that you have written a story after the fashion of Mr. Stiles, and that you are about to

submit it to the *Daily Spur*. If it is accepted, I beg of you not to allow it to be published under your own name.

James Dunkirk to Nancy Blair.

I say, Nancy, you've hit the mark this time. You've got old Stiles beaten a mile. Magnificent as he is, he has never written a story half so good as your "Dagger Through the Heart." I read it through at a gulp, as one might say, and could not let it go until you solved the mystery in such an unexpected way on the last page.

By a curious coincidence, the manuscript reached me at a psychological moment. After reading it, I took it to our literary editor, expecting to have some difficulty in persuading him to consider it. As it happened, he was exceedingly glad to get it, and his opinion of the story is as enthusiastically in its favour as mine. I learned that for the first time in his career Hungerford Stiles had left us in the lurch. On the very morning your manuscript came the literary editor received a letter from Stiles, saying that he wasn't feeling very fit, and was visiting France to recuperate. He had promised us a novel by the 27th, but he wrote that it was impossible for him to finish the work he had in hand by that time. Our old friend, the editor-in-chief, was furious about this desertion on the part of Stiles, and sent him a telegram hot enough to melt the wires, but Stiles had already gone to France, so there was a shilling lost; two dozen winged and stinging words shot into the air. What angered the editor was that the neglectful Stiles had given him less than two weeks to find a new author. So

you see, Nan, your story fitted like a coat of paint, and the editor actually complimented me as being the right man in the right place.

"This is the second time," he said, "that you've pulled the *Spur* out of a hole when the old stagers went back on us."

So, Nance, I've helped you a little, as you've helped me a great deal in this matter. I have accepted their terms without even waiting to consult you, because delays are dangerous. I enclose the cheque.

The Afghan business seems to hang fire, and I don't know yet at what date I shall leave.

Nancy Blair to James Dunkirk.

Dear, kind Jimmy, what a staunch friend you are, and how promptly and decisively you carry to completion anything you undertake. I had no idea so much was paid for what, after all, is rather a trashy story of mine, and I think, Jimmy, that in common fairness, you should accept half. You would make me so proud if you did, and I am sure you are entitled to that and much more, for I never could have got a penny for the novel, not knowing how to set about selling it.

Your letter, Jimmy, came at a most opportune moment, when I was very deeply depressed, and I cannot tell you how much it has cheered me. I am disappointed with myself, and I may add I disappoint others as well. I had flattered myself I was a girl of deep feelings, whereas it has been proved that I am most shallow, with the intellect of a child in an infant school. My engagement with Mr. Gerald Sefton is at an end, and the shallow-

ness I speak of is shown by the fact that I do not even regret the disagreement, which came about by a correspondence that was quite free from harsh language by either party. I fear that all the good qualities formerly attributed to me by Mr. Sefton existed only in his own imagination, but be that as it may, he never, since our engagement, took the trouble to come from London to Norwich to see me, and so I think neither of us is likely to die of a broken heart. Perhaps if I were twenty years older, or he were twenty years younger, the outcome might have been different.

Telegram from James Dunkirk to Nancy Blair.

Delighted to receive your letter. Will answer in person. Have been offered, and have accepted the assistant-editorship of the *Spur*. The Afghans seem to be holding a love-feast, but anyhow I'm not going to attend. The editor has given me a week-end to celebrate my promotion. Leave on the 4.55 train from Liverpool Street. Hope to see you to-night. Jimmy.

Gerald Sefton to Nancy Blair.

When I left England, I subscribed to the *Norwich Bulletin*, and in this remote corner of France, within sound of Biscay's waves, the excellent *Bulletin* is the only English paper I read. You may imagine with what interest I perused the glowing account of your pretty wedding at the Cathedral, and, indeed, there is ample justification for the *Bulletin* in its congratulations to the citizens of Norwich on the union of two such distinguished

fellow-townpeople. So your book is actually in the second hundred thousand ! That alone means a fortune, and I hope its great success in a popular way will turn the attention of the reading public to its predecessor.

For a long time I have been troubled in mind over a concealment that gave, so it seemed to me, a distasteful flavour of secretiveness to our former relationship, especially towards its end. When I used rather too forcible language in commenting upon your estimate of Hungerford Stiles, I think it would have been more candid of me if I had confessed to you that I myself am Hungerford Stiles. This I tell you now in the strictest confidence, for what I have written under that *nom de guerre* is work of which I have always been thoroughly ashamed.

I venture to offer my good wishes to your husband and yourself, thus adding my own slight tribute to the thousands you have already received at Norwich. "May you live long and prosper" was the toast of Rip Van Winkle, and I, a literary Rip Van Winkle, now awake after twenty years, reiterate the wish.

The Scientist and the Shop-girl

ONE would not have expected such behaviour from one so grave and sedate in appearance. He edged closer and closer to the girl, who, quite unconscious of his proximity, gazed through the clear plate-glass window at the ladies' hats marked down to sale prices. She was absorbed in this contemplation, regardless of the passers-by, or of the man twice her age who stood so close to her. She was plainly, but very neatly dressed. Her pale face, though it could not be termed beautiful, possessed an attractive, intellectual quality when you looked twice at her. If gifted with imagination, it is possible that a third observation might stimulate the fancy that she would be very attractive if she smiled, but it was easy to believe that her lips were strangers to smiles. Her outlook upon life was serious, notwithstanding the fact that she squandered some of the scant time allotted to lunch in viewing the attractive feminine headgear behind the pane.

The premature stooping of the shoulders distinguished the man by her side as a student of some sort, old before his time. His brow was lined with thought; his attire careless, threadbare, almost shabby, as befits one who pursues knowledge rather than riches.

Once or twice he moistened his lips and seemed about to address her, but his courage oozed away with a side glance that she gave, and thus he stood there silent. He knew perfectly well who she was, for of late, passing down Oxford Street, he had seen her behind the counter of a glove-shop further up on the same side.

For three consecutive days now he had haunted this section of the thoroughfare during the luncheon hour. He had followed her from the glove-shop to the A.B.C. restaurant where she partook of her frugal midday meal—a cup of cocoa and a plate of buttered toast. Several times he had endeavoured to accost her, but never got even far enough to attract her attention. He was disheartened by this lack of valour, but nevertheless persisted, in spite of his repeated failures to take the plunge when opportunity came.

At last the girl withdrew her eyes from the attractive spectacle before her, and heaved a sigh of disappointment, for even the red figures marking down the cheapest of the hats were beyond the resources of her slender purse. Intuitively the unworldly man grasped the worldliness of the situation; she coveted a hat, but had no money to spare with which to purchase one, yet here was he, hesitating to make offer of what she so evidently lacked. Now was the Heaven-sent, psychological moment; the need and its remedy in conjunction. He took the plunge awkwardly as a drunken man stumbling off a bridge.

The girl shuddered as she felt his touch on her shoulder, and the contemplative eyes quickly turned upon him became wide open and shaded with apprehension.

“I—I will buy any hat in that shop you care to select——”

He got no further. The girl had fled down the crowded street, while he stood there, dismayed, watching her hurrying figure thread its way through the multitude. Once she looked over her shoulder in affright, but seeing she was not followed, moderated her pace. After passing the accustomed A.B.C. shop, and watching for an opportunity through the traffic, she threaded her way to the other side, then, eagerly doubling back, re-crossed the street and reached the haven where gloves were sold.

Staunton Blair saw with regret the inconvenience he had caused, but he knew of no method to remedy it. Unversed as he was in the ways of his fellow-beings, he surmised it would not be the correct thing to buy some sandwiches at the A.B.C. and present them to her in the glove-shop, therefore, rather depressed in spirits, he turned out of the busy street, made his way northward to a poverty-stricken district, and climbing the stair of a forbidding house, arrived at his own room, quite forgetting that he, too, had missed his lunch.

The carpetless room that he entered resembled a chemist's shop that had taken to drink and fallen into disrepute. The shelves were cluttered with bottles of all shapes and sizes, some corked, others with glass stoppers. Apparatus of various kinds presented a makeshift appearance, much of it pianfully constructed from odds and ends that possessed no suitability except cheapness, while other machinery had plainly been discarded by more opulent users, and acquired second-hand. There were many books scattered about much the worse for

wear. Scientific volumes bought at an old bookstore present an advantage and a disadvantage. First, there being little demand for them, they are cheap; secondly, being old, they are usually out of date.

A long, plain deal table, much stained, occupied the centre of the room, and seated before it were three lads, who rose respectfully when Mr. Blair entered.

"I am very sorry, boys," he said. "I have been detained. Please sit down again."

He plunged at once into the lesson he was to teach, and now there was no hesitation in his speech. All languor left his loosely jointed frame, and his kindly, rugged face seemed to glow from the enthusiasm within. He spoke with magical clarity and animation, making plain the intricacies of chemistry with which he dealt. He was now in the world to which he belonged, a world unperturbed by the swish of a woman's skirts.

When the lads had decorously withdrawn, bidding him "Good afternoon" (it was plain that all three were completely enthralled by a master who never uttered a harsh word to them), Staunton Blair sat down on a bench and sank into a deep pondering. He was quite determined not to give up the quest, but thought it might be advisable to change his method. Why not write to her? But, then, he did not know her name, and if he addressed his note to "The girl at the left-hand counter," the letter might be received by some one else. Still, what difference did that make? He had scarcely noticed the other girls, but doubtless one of them would do just as well as she who seemed so frightened at his address. Then, to his surprise,

he found himself shaking his head. After all, he would much prefer this particular girl, who seemed quiet, modest, and lady-like. At last he came to a conclusion, and next day put it into action.

At eleven o'clock the following morning, bold as a buccaneer boarding a brig, Blair entered the glove-shop; hoping his courage would stand by him for the next few minutes. There were several customers within, but the girl he sought was disengaged for the moment. He strode directly towards her, and she, seeing his approach and recognizing him, shrank back against the cardboard boxes on the shelves behind her, her eyelids fluttering with fear. No slave was more helpless at the menace of a master. She dared not make a fuss nor complain against a customer. Customers are sacred and must not be offended. It was her place to serve politely—cringingly, if need be—but on no account to allow that man to leave the shop without having made a purchase. She might smile or flirt or simper, and the Argus eyes to the rear of the place would be blind, so long as something was sold; but if any inattention on her part caused the possible buyer to turn away, then came a reckoning with the proprietor.

Perturbed as she was, she wondered if a man with a face so simple and homely knew, after all, how completely the situation put her in his power. He was not the wicked, leering individual typical of those who pester a girl with unwished-for attentions, and yet he was the same person who yesterday had spoken to her on the street, and from whom she had fled.

He addressed quietly (that was a blessing), with

the quietness of one who has learned his words by rote.

"Miss, I must have a few words with you. It is very important: important both for you and for me. Will you grant me an interview?"

"Sir," she said, also very quietly, "I am here to sell gloves."

"Very good, I have come in to buy a pair."

"What number, please?"

"Two, of course."

"I mean, what is the size of your hand?"

"Oh, my hand! I don't know, I'm sure. I never wore a pair of gloves in my life."

From a shelf behind her she took down a tape measure.

"Please extend your hand."

"Wait a moment; wait a moment. Surely you do not hurry your customers thus? You give them time to choose, select, think, do you not?"

"Certainly, sir."

Her hands dropped to her sides, the tape line dangling from her fingers. Once more she leaned back against the cardboard boxes, and now having, as it were, recovered from her first fright, she looked across at him, and was astonished to see that he seemed more perturbed than she was. Little sparkles of perspiration stood on his brow, and absent-mindedly he drew the back of his ungloved hand across it.

"It isn't gloves for myself I want," he said at last.

"For a lady, perhaps?" she suggested.

"Yes; a pair of ladies' gloves."

"What size, please?" reiterated the girl, putting the measuring tape on the shelf again.

Blair was evidently in a quandary once more. He breathed like a man who is running a race. The interval this time was so long that the shop-girl had more and more opportunity to study the stranger on the other side of the counter. Her quick intuition told her several surprising things, and upset one or two previously formed opinions. She supposed that the man's persistence arose from admiration of herself, and was astonished at the feeling of pique which arose in her heart when she became convinced that he wasn't thinking of her at all. His mind was a slow-working instrument, and the dilemma in which he found himself involved changed its phases so rapidly that he felt a humiliating sense of discomfiture. The more alert intelligence of the girl, accustomed as she was to meet all sorts of people, showed her that he, and not she, occupied the disadvantageous position. It was with no sinister appreciation of her helplessness that he had entered the shop, and she suspected that he wished himself well out of it, but that some dogged element in his nature rooted him to the spot.

Having misjudged him in the beginning, her sympathy was now extended towards him. She wondered if he was sane—if he knew exactly what he was doing.

"Don't you know the size the lady wears?"

"No, I don't."

"I suppose," she ventured, bringing her shapely hand once more into view, "that she wears smaller gloves than I do?"

This remark inspired Staunton Blair with an idea, and his clouded face cleared.

"Her hand is exactly the same size and shape as yours."

"Ah, then we shall have no difficulty. What colour, please?"

"Eh? What colour? I'm sure I don't know. Green, blue, yellow—anything you like. What colour do *you* wear?"

She did not reply, but, turning, took down a pasteboard box, opened it, and spread out a pair of gloves on a piece of tissue paper she had placed on the counter.

"Do you think those would suit?" she asked.

"Oh, perfectly. I'm sure of it. I'll take them."

He drew from his wallet a five-pound note and placed it before her.

"Haven't you anything smaller than that?"

"No," he said, "I want the change."

She called a shop-boy, gave him the note and the price-slip, which he carried to a desk at the rear. The gloves she wrapped up very daintily in the tissue paper, and was about to cover this with brown paper, when he drew a lead-pencil from his waist-coat pocket and said abruptly:

"Wait a minute."

She paused, and he wrote his name and address on the brown paper.

"Oh, you wish them sent?"

"No, I don't. Listen to what I say before that boy returns. You will take four pounds and this address of mine. You will engage a detective. I don't know where you will find one, but any one else can tell you, and ask him to learn all he can about me. I am really a most harmless person—a tutor of sorts, and a student in chemistry. I know no woman on earth except my landlady. Of course, naturally you distrust a stranger, and I am very awkward so far as women are concerned.

You will find from the detective, however, that I am honest, and that you may quite safely grant me an interview of ten minutes or so."

"Even if the detective should confirm all you say, I see no reason why I should grant you the interview."

"I cannot explain here. Meet me somewhere, listen to what I offer, and then decide to do what I wish, or not, just as you like."

"But you can tell me in a word what your offer is?"

"Well, I wish you to accept a better situation."

"I am quite satisfied where I am."

"Then you have no one dependent on you?"

The girl gave a little gasp and leaned back a third time against the boxes.

"Yes," she said in a whisper, speaking more to herself than to him. "Yes, I have some one dependent on me."

"You can use more money than you earn here?"

"Oh, yes."

"Very well. You would be foolish not to listen, wouldn't you?"

"I suppose so. There's no harm in listening."

The boy came back with the change. Blair pushed towards her the four sovereigns, but she ignored them, dexterously wrapping up the gloves.

"Shall I send them to this address?"

"No; keep them. I don't want them." But she pushed the little parcel towards him in such a way that the money was shoved before it.

"I do not need the advice of a detective. I can see that you are an honest man. I will meet you to-day where you spoke to me yesterday. Please put the money into your pocket; the gloves also.

No ; you must not leave them. You embarrass me with your hesitation. Do at once what I tell you."

He slipped the four sovereigns into his trousers pocket, and, taking the gloves in his hand, walked out of the shop as directly and as awkwardly as he had entered it.

He seemed a rather woebegone figure as he stood before the plate-glass window which displayed the ladies' hats, and she took him in charge as if she, and not he, were the pursuer. Without a word she led him down a side street until they reached the Embankment, but did not turn into the gardens as he had expected, making her way instead across the broad thoroughfare to the granite parapet overlooking the river.

Leaning against the parapet, she turned to him.

"I am ready to listen."

"You said you had some one dependent on you," he began. "That person is not a husband?"

"Oh, no. He is my little brother, seven years old. We are alone in the world."

"Are you in love with any one?"

"Is it to talk like this that you have asked me to meet you?"

"We must clear the ground, you know. You will understand later."

"No ; I am not in love, and never have been, and never will be."

"I hope not," sighed Blair, so fervently that she looked up at him in surprise.

Again the thought occurred to her that this man was not in his right mind. He went on, however, without noticing her amazement.

"The situation is this. My only sister, who was much older than I, married a man much older than

herself. He was a harsh, miserly person, but, they tell me, a very good business man. My sister lived very unhappily with him. He always hated me, and so far as my poor sister was concerned, it would have been much better had I died in my infancy. She managed to give me a University course, and thus put me in the way of earning my own living, which I do. She died about ten years ago. Her husband died last month. I don't know why, having been brought up by so good and so devoted a sister, I should feel such fear of women as is the case. My brother-in-law left a will which he knew would embarrass me. He was well aware that I possessed no business qualifications whatever—that I never could make much money for myself; and he also knew that in my researches I needed money every day of my life for apparatus, for chemicals, and for what-not. Personally I should be content to live on half-rations, or even starve occasionally, could I get what I need to aid me in my researches. Knowing all this, he has left me a splendid estate on condition that I marry within two months, otherwise the money goes to an asylum of some kind.

“Of course, I have no wish to marry, but on the other hand, I shall probably see my life frittered away and nullified through lack of money.

“I have studied this predicament night and day ever since the contents of the will were made known to me, and now, if I am to act, I must do so very speedily. God knows I don't mind poverty, if I could but get the appliances I need. I have no desire for wealth, but it occurred to me that if I could meet some one as poor as myself, one not likely ever to marry——”

"Why do you think I am unlikely ever to marry?" asked the girl sharply.

"You said so, only a little while ago."

"But you selected me for your proposal before I said that. Did you judge from my appearance that no man would ask me to marry him?"

"No, no. I didn't think about the matter at all. Your appearance had nothing to do with what was in my mind," he explained earnestly.

"I believe you. Go on, please."

"There is nothing much more to say. If you will promise to marry me, I'll promise you faithfully to leave you at the church door. I'll never molest you, and I'll settle upon you one-half the income, so that you will be as independent as I."

"How much is the income?" she asked in quite her sales-counter intonation.

"The solicitor said it was about five thousand pounds a year."

"Five thousand pounds! Oh, I should never consent to take half of that."

"Very good; I'll give you more. I don't suppose I'll need so much as four hundred. You may have all the rest."

"I didn't mean it that way at all. Two thousand five hundred pounds a year is too much. You don't need to say you are a poor business man, for any one can see that. If you'll settle upon me four hundred pounds a year, I'll marry you under those conditions to-morrow, next week, or any time you like."

"My dear girl," said Blair earnestly, "you do not estimate correctly the disability under which you place yourself. You are young and beautiful. Although you said you would never fall in

love with any one, you cannot be sure of that, and if such an event should happen, you would bitterly regret having tied yourself to me."

"There is no fear of that. Four hundred pounds will be more than enough."

"No ; I will compromise on a thousand pounds, if you like, but not a penny less."

"What you propose is robbery. I shall not accept it."

"But I insist."

"Then I must bid you 'Good-bye.' " She held out her hand.

"You are forgetting your brother. You will want to send him to the University and establish him in some profession. You will find a thousand pounds scanty enough when that time comes."

Her hand dropped to her side.

"Yes," she said, "I was forgetting my brother."

"Then we will get into a taxi-cab and go direct to a solicitor, who will draw up the settlement."

"I must go back to the glove-shop."

"Nonsense ! On a thousand a year ? "

"I must give due notice and buy my liberty."

"I'll see the proprietor and compensate him."

"No ; you'd be cheated. I cannot allow any one to cheat you but myself. This sordid bargain I have made with you is a very model of chicanery."

"I don't see that," he protested. "The compact you have made may prove to be a very onerous one."

"You mean, should I wish to marry some other person ? That is just the point where my deep duplicity shows itself. I had long ago made up my mind never to marry. I proposed to work hard and faithfully until my brother was educated, and then, when he was able to make money, I should

leave the shop and keep house for him ; thus, you see, I am a rogue, accepting a lavish amount of money from you for doing what I intended to do in any case."

" You forget, miss, that the benefits are mutual, only that I get four times the best of the bargain. To put it mathematically, I aid you towards an income of a thousand a year, but you cause me to inherit four thousand ; thus I, as well as you, am enabled to order my life according to my own choosing."

" But any other woman could have done that for you as well as I. Why did you not marry your housekeeper ? "

" She is a most slovenly person," said Blair quite seriously, as if the thought had already occurred to him, " repulsively ugly, and nearly fifty. I believe she already possesses a husband, although I have never seen him. Besides, she drinks. Then, I wished to marry some one who would leave me alone, and that my landlady would never have done, surrounded as she is by friends rapacious and disreputable as herself."

Again the girl seemed disappointed that there was no evidence of even an awakening interest in herself on his part. They walked along the Embankment in silence for a time, until an empty taxicab came along, which he hailed. Again she demurred. Duty called and she felt compelled to obey.

" Oh, never mind the proprietor of the glove-shop," he said. " We will telephone to him when we reach the lawyer's office, and you can call there to-morrow, and give him what compensation you please."

They were now seated together in the cab. "If we are quick about it," he went on, "I think we can be married to-day."

"Oh!" said the girl, with a little gasp of dismay, "why are you in such a hurry?"

"Well, you see, I'm rather an absent-minded sort of person, and I always expect to be run over while crossing a street. If that happened before we were married, even though the papers were drawn out settling on you the thousand pounds, my death would render them null and void. My brother-in-law's wealth would never have been in my possession, you see."

This remark was so blamelessly practical that it called for no answer, and received none. The girl went off on a side issue.

"You have never even inquired my name," she protested.

"True. What is your name?" he asked abruptly.

For a time she did not speak, then answered quietly:

"Edith Melcomb."

"My name you know, of course."

"Yes."

The swift taxicab had now penetrated into the crowded City, and drew up before a sombre building.

"Here we are," he said, with a sigh of relief. "This man upstairs was my late brother-in-law's solicitor, and has charge of all the arrangements. He warned me that before I was married, I must give him notice, so that a clerk or two could attend as witnesses."

The legal arrangements took longer to adjust than Staunton Blair had supposed, and more than a

week elapsed before the marriage took place, celebrated by a business-like registrar, witnessed by two businesslike clerks from the solicitor's office, and finally the scientist accompanied the bride to a hansom, where he shook hands with her, gave the cabman a Chelsea address, and turned away with that sense of relief which a scientific person feels when he has brought a somewhat tiresome scientific experiment to a successful conclusion.

A month from that day, Staunton Blair, in his shirt-sleeves, with hair wildly dishevelled, was absorbed in a distillation when his landlady entered, who more than made good the description he had given of her tawdriness.

"A lady to see you, sir."

Blair straightened himself up with a look of alarm.

"A lady?" he echoed. "What does she want?"

"Didn't say, sir. Wanted to see Mr. Staunton Blair."

"A lady!" he muttered. "What can she want with me? Did she give any name?"

"No, sir. Seems a rich young woman, by the look of her clothes, and came in a carriage."

"Who can she be? There must be some mistake! Tell her so, but if she won't go away, bring her up here. I suppose it can't be helped."

When the lady entered, she stood for a few minutes near the door, looking first at the astonished, tramp-like man before her, and then around at the squalid and disorderly room.

"Don't you know me?" she asked at last.

"Why, yes," he stammered. "You're—you're the girl in the glove-shop."

"No, I am not. I am Mrs. Staunton Blair. My husband is a genius in the scientific world,

they tell me, sure to become famous. I clipped a short article about him from this morning's newspaper, and in case he has not seen it, I have brought it to him."

She laid the newspaper cutting on the table before him. He picked it up and read it, looking rather dazed.

"No; I hadn't seen it; but it is all wrong," he explained. "I fear one of my pupils has rather given me away to some writing man."

"Then you should send a letter to the journal and contradict it."

"Oh, it doesn't matter; it doesn't matter in the least. If it had appeared in a scientific publication, I should have done so, but then a scientific publication wouldn't have printed so erroneous an account."

"Well, it wasn't about that extract that I came to see you, after all; and, by the way, before I say anything further, do you consider this visit an interference on my part?"

"Interference? I'm afraid I don't understand."

"Why, don't you remember our marriage contract? One of us was not to molest the other. Is my coming here, unannounced and uninvited, an infraction of that contract?"

"Dear me, no. You can come here as often as you like. Won't you sit down?"

Once more she glanced around the room and smiled. The chairs, of a very cheap and common pattern, were all piled with manuscript, jars, packages, and other *débris*. In his confusion at endeavouring to remedy the condition that nullified his invitation, he scattered a miscellaneous assortment on the floor, and the girl laughed outright.

"Never mind," she said. "I can't stop for more than a moment."

His face had become very red, and he did not appear to know where to put his hands. The metal dish above the Bunsen burner was boiling over, but he did not notice that.

"I suppose it's vanity on my part, for I've some detestable qualities, but I wished you to know that I was not always a shop-girl, as you called me just now. I am reasonably well educated, having been taught by my father, who was a clergyman. We were always very poor, but we passed for gentle-folk."

"Oh, I knew that from the beginning."

"Who told you?"

"I wasn't told. I just seemed to know it was so."

"Then you are not offended at my visiting you?"

"Certainly not."

"Good-bye," she said abruptly, reaching her hand across the table.

He made a desperate attempt to wipe his right hand on his coat tails, but the coat tails weren't there, so he flushed redder than ever. Gingerly he took her neatly gloved fingers. Next instant she had vanished.

He thought a good deal about her now and then, even when he was absorbed in his work, but time passed on, and she did not return. Once he put on a coat slightly less stained than the one he usually wore, and was about to set out to find her, but was shocked to realize that he had quite forgotten her address. Then he remembered that he had given it away to the cabman.

It was during the depth of winter that she paid

her second call, and it required some bravery for a woman to emerge from comfortable quarters into the streets that day. A dense yellow fog brooded over the town, and her coachman experienced some difficulty in finding his way through the gloom. The landlady came up the uncertain stairs with uncertain steps. She had been taking a little something to mitigate the effect of the fog.

"That same lady," she said thickly, "that called before, is here again."

She looked waveringly, but severely, at her shrinking lodger, being always very strait-laced when in her cups. "'Tisn't proper," she went on, "for people dressed like her to come to a res—res—respectable house like this."

As showing the eternal fitness of things, Blair's candles were all in bottles. He seized one, pushed aside his inebriated housekeeper, and dashed down the stairs. The tall lady in furs smiled up at him. He was as unkempt as ever, and throttling a bottle by the neck that held a guttering candle, haloed by the fog, he resembled some quaint demon of the Middle Ages engaged in alchemy.

"May I come up?" she asked.

"Of course. I have come down for you. Steer clear of the landlady," he whispered. "She's a little overcome by the effect of the weather. Beastly day, isn't it?"

"It's not very pleasant," answered his wife, as she followed him into his dismal den. She closed the door behind her, for the honest housekeeper was clutching the railings of the narrow landing, and Mrs. Staunton Blair feared she might fall into the laboratory among the chemicals. As before, she stood and looked about her. The squalid room

did not run even to a lamp, not to mention gas or electricity. Five candles of various lengths, four in the necks of bottles and one in a jug, scattered their feeble light around a glass retort suspended over a blue flame.

"Still in a rag and bottle shop, Mr. Blair, I see," she said, with a smile.

"It's sufficient, rather than luxurious," admitted the chemist.

"I think," continued the girl, with a laugh, "it must be the landlady's fault. If she clings to her lodger as she does to her railings, no wonder he cannot get away. How do you ever carry on successful experiments in a dungeon like this?"

"Oh, well, if it comes to that, Michael Faraday, you know, made some great discoveries with a few old medicine bottles and a clay pipe or two."

"I venture to believe he couldn't have done it in such a light as this."

She now came further into the room than had been the case before, examining the scrawled labels on the bottles and jars.

"Your landlady is addicted to gin, I suppose?"

"Oh, well," explained Blair, who could not speak ill of any one, "to-day is exceptional. The fog gets into her throat, she tells me."

"Yes, and other fluids as well," commented the smiling girl. "I am not judging by her attitude on the landing, but merely by the labels on most of these bottles. They are guaranteed to contain the best unsweetened gin, except where you have covered over the words with your own labels. I never before saw such a slovenly arrangement of dangerous material. Why, look at this!" she cried, taking up a broad-mouth jar and shaking it. "You keep

your carbide of calcium in a jar with a plain cork ! In this moist climate it should have had a glass stopper."

"I know that," pleaded Blair, "but I lost the stopper."

She placed the jar on the table before her, and took out the cork, sniffing a little at the substance within.

"Just as I thought," she said. "It is disintegrated, and nearly useless." She took up a thick bradawl that lay on the table and bored a hole in the centre of the broad cork.

"That will make it worse than ever," objected Blair.

"No, it won't. Be my assistant, please, and give me a No. 8 glass tube."

Obediently he handed her what she asked for, and she thrust it through the cork.

"Now a carafe of H_2O ."

He handed her the water-jug.

"I hope you know what you are doing," he cautioned, at which she laughed merrily, pouring the water into the jar. The nervous scientist hastily blew out four of the candles, and removed the other to the further end of the room. The pungent, disagreeable odour of acetylene gas made itself noticeable. The young lady's dainty fingers thrust the cork into its place, and she stood for a time admiring her handiwork, bending down her head now and again to the top of the glass tube, with a quick sniff estimating the strength of the gas. Then she struck a match, and in spite of the man's shout of "Look out !" held it over the jar. There was a little sudden pop, then a steady pure white flame that penetrated even the fog to the furthest

corner of the apartment. She stood in the radiance, a charmingly costumed vision of beauty, and Staunton Blair was much more dazzled by her appearance than by the sun-white flame.

She smiled across at him.

" C_2H_2 is all right," she said, "if not diluted too much with that familiar compound which, speaking by weight, is oxygen 23, nitrogen 75.66 and argon 1.34. Your landlady would doubtless call it 'h'air.'"

Staunton gazed at her in astonishment, but seemed struck into speechlessness.

"Well," she said, with a laugh and a sigh, "at last I've got you to look at me."

"My dear girl," he exclaimed, "where did you learn all this?"

"Oh, I have been taking lessons in chemistry. I married a chemist, you know, and so I thought it well to know something of the Black Art. I am a pupil of the renowned Professor Marling."

"Marling!" sneered Blair. "That incompetent charlatan! Always writing about himself and his precious so-called discoveries in the ignorant newspapers."

"My dear sir, Professor Marling is the most charming of men. He teaches a class of more than forty pupils."

"I dare say. It is always the biggest quack that gathers the greatest number of patients. He's no scientific man—he's what we call a popularity hunter."

"Are your three pupils still with you?" she asked sweetly.

"Yes. I'm not on the search for pupils. I am engaged in serious work, and will be quite content

with the approval of my colleagues, if I deserve it."

"Ah, that approval Professor Marling seems not to have attained."

"No, he hasn't. What he's after is the applause of the crowd."

"Strange that I should have thought him so courteous and so learned a man. I have had great opportunities of studying him, because I am not in his large class, but take private lessons from him. He told me yesterday that of all his pupils, he has never met one so apt in chemical research as I."

"Fudge! Stuff and nonsense! What, in less than four months? Don't you believe it!"

"But I like to believe it. I *do* believe it."

"You are taking *private* lessons from him, eh?"

"Yes, and have been for some time."

"Look here, my girl, if you'll take lessons from me, I guarantee that in six months you'll be so far outside the range of Professor Marling's knowledge that he won't be able to understand you when you talk. Blow Professor Marling!"

Staunton Blair had worked himself into a state of such indignation and contempt that for the first time since she had known him, he spoke up like a man. She laughed quietly.

"Will you give me lessons, then?"

"Will I? Of course I will. How often can you come——" he paused abruptly and looked round the dismal room. It was palpable even to his comprehension that this trim figure, so nice, so dainty, did not belong to such a squalid wilderness.

"It is about that I came to see you," she said, taking no notice of his abrupt halt. "Professor Marling has become so successful, and his classes have augmented to such an extent, that he has been

forced to give up his flat and take larger premises. Oh, yes, I know, I know ! He's a humbug and all that, but, nevertheless, as I told you, he's a most delightful man, and he has been very, *very* attentive to me."

"Has he ? " said the chemist through his teeth.

"Yes, no one could have been more kind. But as I was saying, he has given up this flat, which contains nine rooms and a laboratory—oh, so conveniently fitted up, everything arranged so spick and span——"

"Quite so, quite so. Faraday and his clay pipe would have been turned out of it as something incongruous."

"Oh, come now, Mr. Blair, do be fair to Michael Faraday. Surely you are aware that later in life, when he got on, he possessed one of the best-equipped laboratories in the world. Still, all that has nothing to do with what I was about to tell you. I have taken Professor Marling's studio just as it stands, purchasing apparatus and all, and I wish you would come with me in my carriage and visit it. I should like an expert's opinion on the equipment."

Blair scowled at her with a ferocity that was entirely foreign to his kindly nature.

"Of course," said the girl, with drooping eyes, "I know how busy you are, and I should not think of asking so much of your time, except that I am prepared to pay you an expert's fee. Since taking up the attractive study of chemistry, I have been privileged to meet with many men of science, and on being introduced to them as Mrs. Blair, they have almost invariably mentioned your name, and asked me if I were acquainted with the great analytical chemist, Staunton Blair, generally adding that of

course I didn't, because you were not known to the public. You were much too good a man for *that*, they said. 'But by and by,' they added, 'the public will know him as we know him,' and all advised me that if I *could* get an opinion from you, I should secure it by all means. Therefore, Mr. Blair, I ask of you as a favour, to come with me."

"Certainly, certainly," rapidly answered Staunton Blair, quite unable to conceal his gratification at this well-placed flattery, so modestly and convincingly spoken.

When they reached the flat, even his dislike of the popular Professor Marling could not overcome his admiration for the laboratory that celebrity had abandoned. Here were the things he had yearned for, too absent-minded to remember that he possessed the money wherewith to purchase them. He had never yet become acquainted with the fact that he was a rich man.

The two were standing together after the inspection, and she seemed pleased with his appreciation of their surroundings.

"I must stop talking of chemistry," she said, and now her eyes were downcast once more. "We've had enough of that. Do you mind if I speak of myself?"

"I should be delighted to hear how you are getting on," replied Blair fervently.

"I am sorry to say that the disaster you predicted has overtaken me."

"What was that? I don't recollect predicting any disaster."

"Yes. Don't you remember on the Embankment you said, and I denied the possibility of it,

that I might fall in love. Well, I have fallen in love."

"Good lord!" he muttered, aghast, and then again, "Good lord!"

She looked up at him. The colour had fled from his face, and his lips were pale. Then, with quite unnecessary vehemence, he cried:

"Damn Professor Marling!"

Now, this was not only profane, but abominably rude, when you consider that it was uttered in the presence of a lady, and besides that, it was dragging in Velasquez, who had nothing to do with the case, to quote Whistler and Gilbert.

But the lady, in spite of being a clergyman's daughter, did not seem to be so much offended as she should have been.

She kissed his lips, and the colour returned to them.

An International Arrangement

THE shabbily-dressed man standing on the stone wharf had been looking down in silence for some time to the deck of the nondescript craft which bore the name *Nick o' Time* painted on her stern. His face was haggard and deeply marked, his hair grey, and there was a gaunt look about him which, taken in conjunction with his well-worn, loosely-fitting clothes, seemed to indicate that he had not had enough to eat lately. To this conclusion came the one man on board the *Nick o' Time*, who had just finished hoisting the main and, indeed, the only sail, which hung from a stout mast near the prow of the boat. This sail fluttered in the slight morning breeze blowing in from the Mediterranean—a soft south wind that did not move the boat, which was still attached by a rope to an iron ring on the pier. The mariner was tall and thin, and apparently well on in years. His face was bronzed by exposure to wind and salt spray, and his undoubted vigour was set off by a trim sailor suit and the peaked yachtsman's cap that covered his head. As a splendid background to the figures of landsman and seaman stood the magnificent semi-circle of Genoa, the houses ranging tier upon tier up against the clear northern sky.

The date was the twenty-fourth of December, the air more balmy than that of springtime in

northern latitudes, while the glorious rising sun gave promise of a warm day.

"Do you speak English?" asked the shabby man, seeing the other glance up at him.

"After a fashion," replied the sailor jauntily, "although lately I have been more familiar with Italian. I am considered rather good at French, German, and Spanish, and, besides, am one of the few men able to converse in classical Greek and Latin. So choose your language, and you may speedily learn all I know."

The man in the upper station did not smile, but said calmly:

"That craft of yours seems too big to be handled by one sailor, yet not large enough for a party."

"In ordinary weather I can manage *Old Nick* quite well alone. My friends think it funny to call the boat *Old Nick*, but I named her *Nick o' Time* because, on her first voyage, I saved five Italian seamen, whose small ship had sprung a leak and sunk under them. It had weathered one of those sudden squalls the night before, but was too badly damaged for captain and crew to run her into harbour. There are comparatively few good harbours along the Italian coast, and she was trying to make Savana when she sank. They had no proper pumping apparatus, and I came up just at the nick o' time; hence the name of my yacht, which I built for myself down at Spezia. She is not pretty to look at, but is very seaworthy, and there is more room in the cabin than you would imagine. I could take out quite a party if necessary, but I prefer to travel with one or two men who can help me to work the boat and share the expense. I own another similar

craft, which I also built myself, and she is laid up for the winter at Burnham-on-Crouch."

"Where's that?"

"In England, of course. Aren't you an Englishman?"

"No, I'm an American. I guess you're pretty well fixed in the matter of boats. Do you spend your summers in England?"

"No, only a week or two—just long enough to see some of my friends and enjoy a few days at my club. By that time I have the boat in trim, and sail across to Norway, where I live entirely in my yacht, with occasionally a friend."

"Then you are not in business?"

"No, I quit that long ago."

"Made your pile, eh?"

"In a manner of speaking, yes. I set a certain limit to my ambition in accumulating money, and when I reached that limit, I bade good-bye to my profession, which was that of college tutor."

"A college tutor!"

"Yes; languages, you know—ancient and modern."

"Heavens! I didn't think that paid so well."

"Oh, yes! I'm a bachelor, you see, and my expenses were not great, so I said to myself: 'When I get enough money invested in safe securities to bring me in a hundred and twenty pounds a year, I'll retire.'"

"A hundred and twenty pounds! How much is that in dollars?"

"Roughly speaking, six hundred, but somewhat less when it comes to a matter of exchange."

"Why, I shouldn't think that would be enough to

pay your railway fares, living in Italy in the winter and in England and Norway in the summer ? ”

“ Oh, I never spend any of my income on railway fares, except for very short distances. I cycle across Europe, and have ridden to Brest on the west, and to Hamburg on the north-east, and have made most of the ports between the two my objective. Then I take my bicycle with me across the Channel or the North Sea, and wheel up to London.”

The shabby man shivered a little.

“ You seem to enjoy life,” he ventured.

“ Enjoy life ? Of course I do. I’ve had to waste a good deal of it in reaching my present financial position, but that was necessary, and I don’t grudge it. I enjoyed life even when I was making money. Now, with no anxiety on my mind, I take my pleasure, and everything in the world I want is within my reach. The libraries and museums at my disposal, free of all cost, excel the collection of any millionaire, and, as for learning, I learn something new every day. A short time since I began on Sanscrit, and am amazed I never delved into the Eastern languages before.”

“ H-m-m ! ” said the shabby man. “ Some people have rather queer ideas about pleasure.”

“ You may well say that,” answered the mariner cheerfully, “ and you must find many examples of it in your own country, where, they tell me, a man will totter into his grave grasping wildly at the last dollar he is to accumulate.”

“ Oh, you mustn’t believe all you hear,” said the American. “ That may be his way of enjoying himself. It’s the excitement of the game, you know, rather than the clutch for gold.”

“ I suppose it is, but I was merely giving that

as an illustration of your own remark that some people have queer ideas of pleasure. Indeed, I may confess that I am well qualified to understand the motive of that clutch, for although I have no family to look after, I meet many deserving people whom I would like to help, and not having been a professor of mathematics, I make occasional miscalculations that lead to temporary embarrassment. Here we are within a week of the New Year, when, of course, the first quarter of my income is sent to me, but the cargo of this boat represents the very last stiver of this year's dividends, and I did not realize that fact until last night I inadvertently put a too grasping hand into a deplorably empty pocket."

"Strapped, eh?"

"What?"

"Broke—up a tree—penniless."

"Exactly. Still, I've provisions enough aboard for a week, and if there are a few days' delay in the arrival of the money, I'll pay a round of visits on my cycle to a number of friends I have in Italy."

"You've everything thought out."

"One must cut his coat according to his cloth. If I had really thought things out as I should have done, the week of penury which confronts me at the end of this year might not have been called into existence. It is true that I think a good deal, but my thoughts rarely turn towards the subject of finance. Nevertheless, in the present instance, I can scarcely accuse myself of neglecting the one thing needful, as commercial people call money. It was arranged that a friend of mine should accompany me on this expedition, and his contribution towards expenses would have just tilted the scale a little in my favour, but last night I had a post-card from him saying he

could not come. He is an estimable clerk in the employment of a shopkeeper, and he had quite overlooked the fact that the last week of the year was also the busiest. He will join me early in January."

The shabby man pondered for a few moments, then said somewhat hesitatingly :

"What do you say to my taking his place?"

"I'm quite willing, if you have the money to spare."

"That all depends on how much it is, and it will also depend on where you are going. Or have you any definite objective point in your mind?"

"Oh, yes. I sail west, to the little fishing village of Porto San Pietro."

"Is that near a railway?"

"Yes. The Ventimiglia-Genoa line runs directly behind the place."

"Is there any depôt there?"

"You mean a station? I'm not sure, for, as I told you, I rarely use the railway."

"I may not wish to use the railway either; still, being an American, I never like to get far from the hoot of a locomotive. I am a restless individual, not in the best of health, as you may see, and I'm quite likely to get tired of this, and in that case I'd want to return to Genoa as quickly as possible."

"Well, when we arrive at Porto San Pietro, we'll find out where the nearest station is, and I can run you along the coast in this boat until we reach it, or, if you like to walk, I'll accompany you."

"I'm no good at walking," growled the man. "How much did you say this trip would cost me?"

"It will all depend on how long you remain aboard. I shan't return to Genoa for at least a week. If you stop for a week, we'll need to lay in

some more provisions, and you'll pay half their price."

"How about cooking?"

"Oh, I'll attend to that, and will guarantee to get you something good."

"What I wanted to say was that you can expect no help from me either in running the boat or washing the dishes. I suppose your friend who can't come would have assisted in both these spheres of usefulness, so I must be charged a little more than would have been the case with him."

"Yes, I see the justice of that. If you get tired of the trip, say, at the end of the first day, would you think four shillings exorbitant?"

"That's a dollar, eh? A dollar a day was what a country hotel used to charge when I was a youngster, but living has become dearer since that time. I intended to say, when you spoke of good cooking, that the very simplest dishes will do for me. I suffer from dyspepsia."

"In that case I'll make it cheaper."

"No, no; I'm not trying to beat you down."

"I am sure of that. It's all a question of whether you have the money to spare or not. You'll need to save enough for your railway fare, in case you fail to return with me."

"I've got sufficient coin right here in my clothes to live a week in your floating palace, and yet have enough remaining to buy transportation from Ventimiglia to Genoa."

"Oh, then you're all right! Step aboard, and we'll get off."

"Just wait a moment till I scribble a note, so that the people where I'm staying will not be anxious about me."

He took from his inside pocket a small, thin memorandum book and a pencil, wrote hurriedly for a few moments, tore out the page, and waved it as a signal to some men who lay on their oars in a small boat. They responded instantly, and he handed the sheet down to them. When he returned, he found that the mariner had detached his small yacht from the iron ring, and was holding the craft alongside the stone steps. The shabby man came on board and sat down in a canvas deck-chair brought up from the cabin for his convenience by the sailor.

With an oar at the stern, the Englishman sculled the little yacht out of the harbour, her sail still fluttering in the wind. They passed a large white yacht riding at anchor—a vessel of proportions so perfect that one might not realize she was nearly as large and commodious as an ocean liner. The oarsman read the words “*La Giaconda*, New York.”

“That’s a well-designed vessel,” he said to his passenger, “and evidently hails from your side of the water.” But the man he addressed took little interest. He seemed to be sleepy, or ill, or both, for he neglected even to glance across at her.

“I’ve seen her before,” he explained. “She has been lying here for about two weeks. Rather a jolly party of sightseers aboard, I suspect.”

“*La Giaconda!*” muttered the rower. “I’ll wager she was so named by a woman.”

“Yachts are built for them, and so very well may be christened by them. You’re up on languages—what does it mean?”

“It means the greatest painting by Italy’s greatest artist—a picture of a woman with an enigmatical smile. The picture belongs to France,

and its title seems well chosen for so beautiful a yacht."

"See here," cried the American, rousing himself up a bit, "let's introduce ourselves. My name is Grant Jettison. What's yours?"

"Richard Lancaster."

"All right, Captain Lancaster; now we know each other. You seem hale and hearty, and wiggle that oar back and forward as if you understood the business. How old might you be?"

"I am sixty-five," replied Lancaster.

"Jumping Jehoshaphat! You don't mean it! Why, I'm forty-nine, and I feel old enough to be your grandfather!"

Lancaster pulled in his oar, as they were now clear of the harbour, seated himself at the tiller, and headed the craft toward the south-west. The sail filled in the gentle breeze, and the yacht leaned slightly toward the shore as it went along.

"They say a man is as old as he feels," remarked Richard conventionally. "I have always lived a very quiet life, and doubtless you have condensed a hundredfold my experience with the world. I quit work on my fiftieth birthday. Tired of teaching others, I have been teaching myself this last fifteen years."

"I don't know but you have taught me a lesson. You seem to get a good deal out of existence; and, after all, perhaps that's the main thing. I suppose that, whatever course he takes, a man wishes he had chosen some other route, and at my age especially, if his health is broken, he begins to doubt the wisdom of his past."

"I feel that way myself," agreed the helmsman. "I am sorry I quit work so early; sometimes I regret it bitterly."

"I thought you were one of the most self-satisfied men I ever met. It is encouraging to learn that you have your doubts. Why do you regret having ceased work when you did?"

"The present voyage explains that. I confessed to you my penniless condition. This temporary bankruptcy comes on with great regularity about once a year, and I feel hampered. Had I continued to make money until the amount I invested produced, say, a hundred and fifty pounds annually, financial pinch might not recur so often."

"Perhaps you are extravagant," said Jettison, with a smile that had something of a sneer in it.

"I fear I am. In future I must give more attention to figures," replied the Englishman soberly. "I am sure that if I devoted some thought to the matter, there is much I might do without; but, being a selfish creature, I lack the courage to limit my luxuries."

"What luxuries, for instance?"

"Well, smoking is a good example. Are you a smoker?"

"I used to be, but had to knock it off. Doctor's orders. However, I keep some good cigars for my friends, and I find they are very acceptable in Italy, where tobacco is both expensive and bad. Have a cigar?"

Jettison took out of his pocket a leathern case and selected from it a fat cigar, which he handled with affectionate yearning.

"No, thank you," said Lancaster, shaking his head.

"Nonsense! Why?"

"I'm too fond of smoking."

"All the more reason you should take it. You'll find it excellent."

"I am sure it is good, but I could not sit here smoking while you were tobacco-less."

"Ah, that shows you to be an impracticable man. Such self-sacrifice serves no useful purpose. Won't you change your mind?"

"No, thank you."

Jettison made no further proffer of the weed, but, after regarding it for a few moments, put it back in his case again with a sigh over joys that were past.

They were passing wonderful scenery, but the man in the deck-chair paid little attention to it, gradually dropping off into an uneasy slumber. It was high noon when he awoke, and they were well out at sea, with the mountainous coast-line looking like a purple cloud on the northern horizon.

"Have I been talking in my sleep?" he asked.

"Not a word. I hope it has refreshed you. It should do you good out here in the open air."

"Yes, I feel better. Had very uneasy dreams, though, and thought I might have been talking. I was struggling with all my might to earn six hundred dollars a year, and wasn't succeeding very well."

Lancaster laughed.

"An income of that amount," he said, "takes a bit of making and a bit of saving. Now, if you'll come to the tiller for a while, I'll cook you a mess of pottage."

"No appetite," objected the other, "but I'll give you a chance to cook something for yourself—that is, if you'll risk my upsetting the boat, for I don't know the first thing about tillers or sails either. I can't even row."

"There is no danger of your upsetting *Old Nick* in this gentle breeze. Just keep her in the wind as she goes, pushing the tiller to the north when you wish to go south, and that's all there is to it."

"Seems simple enough," said Jettison, rising and taking his host's place, while the latter went down into the cabin. In a short time Lancaster returned with a plate of macaroni, done in a famous Italian fashion, and a half-bottle of wine, from which he had drawn the cork.

"You try this," he said, "and then say I can't cook, if you dare."

"It smells good," admitted the passenger, "and I'll tackle it, but won't offer any criticism. I guess I won't venture on that wine. I suppose you've no ice-water aboard?"

"There is water, but I recommend the wine, which goes well with this dish. Some of the wine grown in the same valley is so delicate that it will not bear transportation to the next valley. This, however, will not be injured by a short voyage such as we are making, and I think you'll like it."

Jettison consumed both the macaroni and the wine.

"You're a prime cook," he said, "and the drink deserves your praise. This is the first meal I've really enjoyed for a month."

"You don't mean to say you've been starving?" asked Lancaster, a sudden suspicion rising in his mind that this man might be without money; and an expression of sorrow appeared on his face when he remembered that he, too, was penniless, and could do nothing to aid his guest.

"Starving? Well, practically that."

"I'm very sorry to hear it," said Lancaster in

tones of deep sympathy, which convinced his passenger that, while making no complaint about his own financial stringency, he was in deep distress over the poverty of another.

"I say," Lancaster went on, "I have my bicycle on board. You wait and take care of the ship when we drop anchor, and I'll wheel back to Genoa. When I told you I hadn't a copper, that was technically true, but I am sure that, if I was once in Genoa, I could raise a little money, which I should be glad to let you have. You can pay me back when your dream comes true."

"My dear fellow, in my dream I didn't get the cash."

"Better still. Dreams go by contraries, they say."

Jettison indulged in a slight laugh that had not much merriment in it.

"You forget that to-morrow is Christmas Day, and the banks will be closed."

"I'm not thinking of the banks. I had in mind some friends who may be able to accommodate me."

"We won't put such strain on friendship," said the other cynically. "You overlook the fact that I told you I had money enough to pay my fare on your sloop, and also the price of a ticket to Genoa. I'll show you the boodle if you don't believe me."

"Oh, I believe anything you say."

"Then that's all right. I think you worry too much about other people, and, strange as it may seem, don't give enough thought to your own affairs. You appear to be that rare object, an unselfish man, whose doings would read very prettily in a book, but who is not much good in real life. It's dog eat dog in this world."

"I should hope not. Isn't there an adage to the effect that one should help a lame dog over a stile?"

"Perhaps there is, but one gets no gratitude on that account. Still, gratitude's a cheap product, even though it is so seldom met with. You told me this yacht is filled up with goods of some sort, which I understood accounts for your own penniless condition. Are you trading along the coast?"

"Certainly not; I'm a professional man."

"Yes, I thought you wouldn't be much good on a deal. What's your cargo?"

Lancaster appeared rather ashamed to confess, but at last he blurted out the truth.

"My cargo demands a little explanation. I do a considerable amount of boating and of cycling, consequently I make many acquaintances and not a few friends. The sparsely inhabited village of Porto San Pietro is very poor, which is no reproach to the inhabitants, for they are industrious and hospitable. They're all friends of mine, especially the children. Italians don't make much of the Christmas season—Easter is their great time—so I promised to show them a Christmas-tree, which will blossom out to-night. It's a kind of co-operative celebration. They are to cut a pine tree on the hills and drag it down to the beach; I bring some toys and a sufficiency of candles from Genoa. In a manner of speaking, I am Old Father Christmas for the occasion, and shall don a magnificent grey beard, rented for one night only from a costumier in Genoa. The young ones and I have an appointment for this evening on the beautiful sandy shore of Porto San Pietro, in a nice little sheltered bay. I'm sure you will admire the place when you see it."

“ And it was for this that you bankrupted yourself ? ”

“ Oh, no ! I have been too lavish in my expenditure throughout the year. This outburst is merely a grand finale, and a most suitable one.”

“ I think, Mr. Lancaster, you are incorrigible. I doubt if you can be reformed, but we'll attend to the present, and let the future look after itself. Do go down cellar and get yourself something to eat. I'll keep your old scow headed toward the west. I seem to have caught the knack of this rudder.”

The sun had set behind the western mountains when Lancaster turned into the little bay at Porto San Pietro. The beach and the ancient, closely-packed village that faced it formed a picturesque scene that deserved any eulogy the boatman might lavish upon it.

The foreshore was crowded with youngsters of all ages and sizes, who raised a great cheer as the yacht drifted peacefully into the bay, and Lancaster fluttered an Italian flag towards them before hoisting it to the peak. As he dropped the anchor, a fishing-boat was launched by stalwart men of the sea, who rowed it out to the *Nick o' Time*, and greeted her captain with all the fervour of the Latin race. They brought up the packages from the cabin, helped the passenger aboard the fishing-boat, the captain having sprung in unaided, and then made for the shore.

The youngsters were more anxious to exhibit their own handiwork than to inspect their benefactor's purchases. They dragged him boisterously toward the pine tree, which lay propped up with a crotched stick, so that its branches were clear of the sand, while its butt rested by the side of a hole

dug for its reception. They wanted their friend to see how closely his instructions had been followed.

And now there stood forth a bevy of fishergirls, handsome as laughing sirens, who with deft fingers attached presents and candles to the tree, Lancaster opening the packages for them. The children stood round in a circle, but out of the way, very obedient and now very quiet, while their elders formed a fringe round the outside. Amazing was the number of the gilded, glittering, and coloured toys; innumerable seemed the unlighted candles, white in the gathering dusk. When all was completed, some of the fishermen stepped forward and raised the tree till it stood straight as if it had grown there, while others shovelled in the sand that was to hold it in place.

There came a sound of chanting; the circle made way, and left a clear lane down to the tree. With slow steps approached the aged *Curé* of the village, attended by the surpliced choir and a couple of assistants, each of whom held in his hand a tall, thin pole, at the upper end of which a flame rose in the still air.

The candles were set alight, until the tree was a blaze of light, and exhibited now the full glory of the tinselled toys—

And even the ranks of Tuscany could scarce forbear to cheer.

The Syndico, or chief man of the village, was to have presented the gifts, and he stood there smiling in his robes of office beside the aged *Curé*; but on learning that Lancaster had brought a stranger with him, and that the stranger was from America, the Syndico, with true Italian politeness, insisted

that this should be an international affair, and asked the American to take his place.

Jettison would have liked to decline the honour, but nevertheless came forward in answer to Lancaster's persuasion.

"All right," he said at last, "if I'm not expected to make a speech."

The owner of the *Nick o' Time*, having donned the patriarchal white beard, gave an example of an unimpaired memory. One after another, without hesitation, he named every boy and girl in that assemblage.

"Enrico Bellotti!" he began, as he handed a toy to his comrade.

A boy handsome as a cherub stepped from the ring. Jettison presented the toy and patted his curly head. Enrico, with a bow worthy of a courtier, murmured his thanks in the soft Italian speech, and walked to his place again. So each boy and girl was named till all had received their gifts from the blazing tree.

After the events of the day, Jettison slept soundly in the bed made up for him by the captain of the yacht. Next morning it was evident that the old spirit of restlessness was upon him.

"I must get back to Genoa," he said; and although Lancaster offered to sail there in the *Nick o' Time*, the other would not listen to such an arrangement. So his host walked with him to the station, which was not many hundred yards away, and where only slow trains stopped. Lancaster was unable to judge whether or not the American had been impressed by the ceremony that had taken place the night before, for he made no comment on it one way or the other.

On the day after Christmas, the yachtsman sat on deck in the steamer-chair, enjoying a volume that dealt with Sanscrit. He was at peace with all the world, and thus *en rapport* with the season of peace. Glancing out on the Mediterranean, he saw approach from the east a great white steam-yacht, from which fluttered the Stars and Stripes. He recognized her at once as the vessel that had been lying in Genoa harbour. As she passed the entrance to the bay, her flag was dipped in salute, and then there came the report of a cannon, which brought all the inhabitants of Porto San Pietro to their doors. The steamer never paused, but the firing continued until she passed the western headland. Some fishermen rowed out to the *Nick o' Time* to inquire the reason of this demonstration, but the Englishman confessed his inability to account for it.

"Perhaps," said the Syndico, who was now in ordinary costume, "she passed this way the other night, and saw our Christmas-tree."

"Our Christmas-tree had nothing to do with it," replied Lancaster. "That yacht was anchored in Genoa harbour when I left there." So the unaccountable conduct of the foreign vessel had to remain a mystery.

"Here," said the Syndico, drawing from his pocket a long envelope, "is a letter which arrived for you this morning." And with this the party rowed ashore again.

Lancaster, astonished, opened the envelope and drew forth a number of documents which looked like deeds or other legal instruments. There was, however, a letter, typewritten, with a printed heading under the monographic flag of a club.

“Yacht *La Giaconda*.”

“MY DEAR LANCASTER,” it ran :

“As you are yourself so lavish in giving Christmas gifts, I hope you will allow me to forestall New Year’s Day, Christmas belonging to the past. The giver of presents would be a snob if he did not upon occasion accept one himself, and I am sure you are no snob. It seems scarcely worth while to make two bites at a cherry, for though I remember you wanted only a hundred and fifty dollars more a year, the enclosed securities will net you at least six hundred dollars per annum, and are more likely to increase than to diminish in value, so I advise you not to sell them. You may do what you please with the income, and with the securities themselves, for that matter, for I take you to be a man on whom good advice is wasted. I suggest that you live on your present annuity, augmenting it, perhaps, with the hundred and fifty dollars you needed, and then use the rest in helping lame dogs over stiles. I have made many millions in my life, and have given away much money, endowing more or less useless institutions of one kind or another, but I learned on Christmas Eve that if a man wants true friendship, money itself will not buy that. I take it that a person must give affection before he is to receive it. A man seems to get back what he gives away. I’ve given much money, and have received much more. I have been absorbed in work, and have been too busy to bestow much personal affection, therefore I have received little. You were a richer man than I, and a less lonely man, on Christmas Eve.

“Good-bye. I am off to Florida.

“Yours sincerely,

“U. S. G. JETTISON.”

The Sad Story of the Second Brother

I. A STORMY SATURDAY NIGHT.

ANGRILY the rain lashed the shuddering windows, audible evidence of the storm's strength, the precursor of winter, for every weather-wise farmer will tell you that frost and snow cannot come until the marshes are overflowing. This was a swamp-filling deluge, the death of the autumn, and might turn to snow before morning, presenting to the world new-born winter in its white swaddling clothes.

Inside the farm warmth and comfort seemed to be enhanced by the violence of the tempest without. Here was good cheer sweetened by companionship and affection. The kitchen was the ample living-room of the family, parlour and dining-room being reserved for formal occasions.

From the stout beams hung savoury hams smoked to a rich brown, representing the solid requirements of life, while the graceful festoons of dried apples, quartered and strung like loops of pearls, gave promise that the table would not be without a dainty dish even if nothing were seen of the sugared preserves in the cellar, that appetising storehouse of the farm. This practical decoration of the roof was also reminiscent of the light-

somest of farm festivals, the paring bee, when the youth of all the district gathered together amidst laughter, story, and song to peel the apples, core them, and string them, and dance to the local fiddle when the easy task was done.

The huge cast-iron cooking-stove occupied one end of the kitchen, and was the nucleus round which the household formed itself in the evenings.

The farmer sat smoking in a chair tilted back against the wall, his heel on the lower rung. It was a stout construction, able to stand the strain of resting on two legs instead of four without a protesting creak, rush-bottomed, and made before machine-built furniture was thought of.

The house-mother occupied a rocking-chair, also of home manufacture—a chair invented in a land where by and by people were to rest quickly if they rested at all. She was darning stockings. Her tall, handsome daughter was putting away the last of the supper-dishes.

The eldest son, with a piece of broken glass, scraped a new axe-handle of straight-grained hickory, white as a bone and almost as hard. It was an artistic production, of gentle curves; and every now and then the boy fitted its smooth surface to his palm, and swung it as a warrior might swing a sword, critical of his own work, and ever trying to perfect it, for a well-planned axe-handle is a delight to the grip of a woodman. The younger children were grouped around the artisan in open-eyed admiration of his skill.

The solid house withstood the blast staunchly, momentarily quivering, however, to its root-timbers, an involuntary tribute to the strength of the tempest.

86 SAD STORY OF THE SECOND BROTHER

"I pity any poor creature who has no home to go to this night," said the house-mother, with a sigh.

"And I," said the farmer, removing his pipe, "pity any one who *has* a home to go to. I wouldn't like to go far to a home *this* evening."

It was the expected reply to the mother's customary remark, and the children laughed joyously, as if the joke were as new as the axe-handle.

The farmer had reason to be contented with his position. The long Civil War was ended this some time past, and a season of rather feverish prosperity had set in. The negro was free, and the torn country was at rest. With a quiet celerity, unparalleled in history, the greatest military force the world had yet beheld dissolved and merged into the body politic from which, full armed, it had sprung to answer the call to battle. Peace was on the land; the land was fertile; and the farmer, supreme master of his acres, had cause for contentment.

"What a fearful night!" murmured the mother, as the windows rattled and the house shook, while the rain tore across the roof like trampling cavalry.

"It is that!" assented the farmer, refilling his pipe.

As they spoke those words the group was startled into awed silence by a knock at the kitchen-door.

2. THE ADVENT OF THE TRAMP.

The two unsupported legs of the farmer's chair came down with a crash to the floor.

"There is something wrong," he said in a low voice. "No neighbour would venture out on such

a night except under spur of calamity. I hope Simmonses' new frame-house has not blown down and crushed them."

"Open quickly!" cried the wife, all colour leaving her cheeks.

The farmer flung wide the door, heedless of the lashing rain which the verandah-roof but scantily intercepted. The lamplight shone on a stranger clothed in soaking rags, a haggard figure, relic of the Civil War, pioneer of a sinister hoard—a tramp. He made no motion to enter, but stood enframed in the doorway, a hapless personification of the black storm, which seemed to have tossed him against this square of light. Nevertheless, there was a suggestion of sullen defiance in the deep tones with which he announced himself.

"I am John Harmon," he said, "who asks food and shelter, without the money to pay for either."

"Come in!" cried the farmer cordially.

The vagrant stepped across the threshold, and the farmer put his shoulder to the door, closed, and barred it. As he turned from his task and viewed the disconsolate object standing there, he saw that a pool of water was forming round the broken boots.

"Come with me," he said, "and I will get you some dry clothes. Susy, set out a bit of supper."

The two disappeared to the loft above the kitchen, and the girl placed food upon the table.

The word "tramp" was at that time practically unknown in its present baleful significance, and this was the first of these human derelicts that had drifted upon that farm, so he was treated with all the kindness that would have been bestowed upon a visiting friend. Yet this courtesy seemed to have

no mollifying effect on the saturnine stranger, whose dark brow wore a perpetual frown as he wolfed the food set before him. The lank, wet hair plastered on each side of his hollow cheeks framed a countenance almost ferociously forbidding. When he had finished his meal he pushed away his plate, and drew up to the fire, shivering as he spread out his hands to the warmth. His advent had stricken all joy from the household, whose younger members gazed on the unknown with apprehension and dismay. He proffered neither thanks for his welcome nor apology for his intrusion, but sat grimly silent until addressed by the farmer, whose questions he answered with brief gruffness.

"This is like to be the end of our autumn weather, Mr. Harmon. It is a wild night outside."

"A fierce storm in a fierce world," replied the mendicant without looking up.

"How came you to be out in it?"

"I had no choice."

"Are you looking for work?"

"My work is done. I am useless. Wrecked by the war."

"Were you wounded?"

"No."

"To what regiment did you belong?"

"To none."

"Were you an army camp-follower, then?"

"I saw nothing of the army and nothing of the war."

"Then I must have misunderstood your remark that you were wrecked by the war."

"Wrecked by the war and a woman."

"Oh. You married badly?"

"I never married."

“ Ah ! ”

The farmer glanced uneasily at his family, each member of which regarded their guest with absorbed attention. John Harmon seemed to feel the constraint that had suddenly fallen upon the assemblage ; and he ventured upon a longer discourse than had hitherto been the case, although it is doubtful if it gave much further enlightenment to the auditors.

“ During all my life I have hardly spoken to any woman except my mother, who is long since dead. I was never in love, never engaged, never married, avoiding all women, for it had been predicted that one should ruin me ; and the prophecy, made when I was young, remained in my mind and terrified me all my life. Now I am undone, and by a woman. The story is long, and would do you no good to hear and me no good to tell. If there is a place under this roof where I may lie down for the night I will now go to it.”

The farmer ceased his questioning, rose, and led the way to the loft.

“ Poor man,” said the house-mother, as she watched the despondent figure of the tramp disappear for the night.

3. A GLOOMY SUNDAY.

On Sunday morning the rain had ceased, and the wind had fallen, but the heavy clouds hung low and threatening. Once the red sun shone for a moment over a flooded landscape, touching the long pools in the autumn furrows with crimson, and giving the bosom of the earth the appearance of being gashed by lancets ; then the obscuring clouds covered all with grey again.

When John Harmon came downstairs, breakfast was past, but an ample portion had been left on the table for him.

"We are early risers," was the farmer's greeting, "and we breakfast early. The morning hour has gold in its mouth, says the proverb, and of no occupation is that so true as of farming. You will pardon us for not waiting, for even on Sunday it is difficult to break the habit of the week."

"Habit makes strange playthings of us," replied the tramp, with more of geniality in his tone than had been noticeable the night before, although he made no apology for his own tardiness. "I am myself a victim of habit. All my days I have been a farmer, so I know the necessity of early rising, and I am encouraged that I was able to sleep late this morning."

"Why do you say 'encouraged'?" asked the farmer, in surprise. "Is not the habit a good one?"

"It may be good or bad; but so long as I am able to shake off the thralldom of any habit, I have reason to rejoice, for I am the hapless victim of habit and heredity, and hope to win my freedom yet. Why should the negro be free and I a slave?"

"You have at least one habit that is bewildering," commented the perplexed farmer. "You speak in riddles. Last night you said you had been wrecked by the war, and then admitted that you had seen nothing of it. Then you were ruined by a woman, yet had rarely spoken to one. Now you place disaster to the account of habit and heredity, whatever the last may be, of which I have no very clear knowledge. Did all four combine to your discomfiture, or did one after another overthrow

you, the last downfall leaving you unable to rise again ? ”

The tramp laughed, but there was no mirth in the hardness of his laugh ; and it was a sound so unpleasant to hear that the farmer's wife, in a whisper, begged her husband to discontinue the questioning. But curiosity is ever a quality of those who live remote from the world ; and the farmer's interest was so fully aroused that he concentrated his whole attention on the stranger, and paid small heed to the evident distress of his wife.

“ Sir,” said the vagrant, “ if you require a full explanation it shall be given to you. Know, then, that if it had not been for the war I should not have been placed in the peril that encompassed me at its close. If it had not been for the woman that peril would have passed me by. If it had not been for heredity, habit might not so easily have enchained me. If it had not been for habit I could still mend my misfortunes, for I am not yet an old man. There you have the situation in a nutshell ; and I hope I have satisfied your curiosity as completely as your generous breakfast has satisfied my hunger.”

As the uncanny guest said this he drew his chair back from the table, and for the first time looked his host in the eye, a cynical smile playing about his thin lips, which was as disquieting to see as his laughter was to hear.

The farmer was plainly in a quandary, and his eyes sunk beneath the hypnotizing gaze of the other.

“ It may be the dulness of the clodhopper,” he said at last, “ but I must confess your solution of the mystery leaves me still in the dark. I may agree

with each of your propositions, but I grope in vain for the application."

"Do you go to church?" asked Harmon.

"As a general rule we do; but the church is four miles away, and the roads are fit for neither man nor beast to-day."

"Then, sir, if you wish, you shall hear my sermon instead; but I fear that, like my propositions, you may not see the application of it to any useful purpose, beyond what comes from hearkening to a tragedy. Last night I was unpardonably rude to you when I said that my story would profit neither me in the telling nor you in the hearing. Its telling is the only return I can make for your ungrudging hospitality; and if you care to listen I am most willing to relate."

The farmer expressed his desire to hear, but his wife regarded the stranger with deep distrust. The children, however, were so eager for the story that they pressed around their mother, clamouring and whispering. She bade them sit down and be quiet, interposing no objection to the hearing of the tale, greatly to their relief. The tramp began, and continued his narration in a dull voice that had little of either emphasis or inflection in it, and he was uninterrupted to the end.

THE STORY

4. THE EMIGRANTS.

"My father, Richard Harmon, was an Englishman, who, at the age of twenty-one, emigrated to America, seeing little hope of bettering his condition in the old country.

“ I have nothing of ancestry to boast, for my father was of the labouring class, sober, industrious, and very poor. He was betrothed to a girl of his own class, like himself in farm service, and so little money had they he could not marry her and bring her with him, but left her in England, hoping that America, which they regarded as an El Dorado, would shortly provide the means for their reunion. They were destined to live apart for some years, filled with anxiety for the future, which was nevertheless sweetened by hope. My father became the hired man of a German who was considered thrifty and well-to-do for that time and that district. He owned a large farm, and was, I believe, a somewhat hard taskmaster ; but he must have found his new employee a willing slave, for he was eager to become acquainted with American methods of agriculture, and soon found he had as much to unlearn as to learn.

“ He saved money from his scanty wages, and finally secured a farm of his own, which prophetically he named Hardscrabble, after the English fashion of giving a title to a piece of landed property. I think it likely that his innocence was perhaps taken advantage of, for Hardscrabble was then, as it is to-day, the poorest farm in the neighbourhood ; but nevertheless he entered upon his new purchase with all the enthusiasm of youth and all the dogged determination of his race. When the harvests were good prices were low ; when prices were high it was because farmers had little to sell. Ill-luck seemed a two-edged sword, cutting with either edge. Nevertheless perseverance is bound to tell ; and, in spite of bad crops or indifferent prices, my father at last accumulated money

enough to send for my mother, and they were married.

5. THE FIRST FARM AND THE FIRST SON.

“The severe struggle had told on the characters of him who breasted it and her who waited. My parents have been described to me by those who knew them at that early date as a careworn pair, with a haunting fear of the future in eyes which should have been lighted with the joy of youth. Their prospects did not improve when they began life together in Hardscrabble Farm. Indeed, affairs went from bad to worse, until at last they saw that unless something drastic were done they were like to lose their property.

“My father tried to sell the farm, but no one would bid even the amount of the mortgage upon it. Money was not to be had. So with bitterness in their hearts they abandoned the unkind homestead and went into servitude again, taking once more as master the German, for whom my father had but small affection, that frugal farmer being the only one in the district able to pay their hire. My mother went as general servant in the house, while my father became a farm-hand in the fields; and her wages were greater than his, because women were scarce and men plentiful.

“I have never heard either my father or my mother speak of this period of their lives; but I am sure that no negro in the South, for whose liberty the country was even then drifting towards the red sea of war, was more miserable in his bonds than those white slaves in the thrall of a foreigner.

“They endured nearly a year of hard work and ill-usage, until the culmination came when the ter-

magant of the kitchen cruelly berated her drudge, who seemed unable to complete her daily task. Then my mother crept away from the place in the gathering night, and some homing instinct drew her leaden feet to the wretched log hut which was still nominally her own. Under its broken roof she dragged herself, and there my eldest brother was born. There, an hour past midnight, my distracted father found the two, as near to death's door as they ever should be until it opened at last to receive them.

"My father, exhausted by his long, fruitless searching in the forest, flung himself on the hard planks beside them and wept; and my mother told me years later that she thanked the God who gave her momentary strength to move her hand through the darkness to my father's head, that the touch might comfort him, for she was unable to speak."

The mendicant paused for a moment, leaned his elbow on the table, and shaded his eyes with his hand. The farmer's wife gazed pityingly at him through her tears, and the children huddled around her, half understanding, half afraid, enthralled by the dull, monotonous tone in which the tale was told. The farmer clenched and unclenched his hand, and murmured under his breath something that sounded profane.

"Well," continued the tramp, rousing himself, "that was the lowest ebb of their fortunes. They had never made complaints, yet some knowledge of their treatment and their plight had been spread abroad, and the heart of the people was touched. There is much of kindness beneath the surface in this world, however harsh the surface may appear.

“ A neighbour found them in the morning, and my mother and her child were taken away and cared for. A battalion of men, young and old, descended on the farm, repaired the roof and mended the fences, pretending it was but a day’s sport. Women and boys brought food, seemingly for the workers ; but there was ample left in the log house. Chairs were brought, and apparently forgotten. And the jolly workers wrought transformation on the farm, heartily smiting my father’s bowed back, and telling him they would require a day’s work from him in return, swearing they were but acting selfishly, looking to their own future needs ; and he, poor man, could not control his own voice to thank them for their kindness.

“ In due time my mother arrived home, in her arms a strange, unblinking baby, who looked out upon existence with never a cry or a smile from that time forth. The family began to prosper, my father’s tireless industry and sobriety overcoming a fate that had seemed so adverse. My remembrance of him gives me a picture of a man, silent, kindly, and contented, but they tell me that in those early days he was sad and uncommunicative.

6. THE SECOND FARM AND THE SECOND SON.

“ Although Hardscrabble was not the best farm in the county, my father had ever an unaccountable liking for the place ; and no offer he received as times grew better would induce him to part with it. My mother, however, never cared for it ; and two years later my father bought an adjoining lot of a hundred and sixty acres, partly because it was much better land, and partly to please my mother, who refused to have the new frame-house,

then projected, built on Hardscrabble. The new house was erected, and the family moved into it. A year after I came into the world which was to be my undoing.

“Richard was five years my elder. He was a sullen, taciturn youth, and, if thwarted, fell into a condition of cold rage that was dreadful to behold. My young days were clouded by fear of him. He seemed to be at silent war with the world, and had no friends. Every one disliked and avoided him ; he returned it with fierce but dumb hatred. Even our father was afraid of him, and was never known to cross him. Our mother, however, loved him to the last day of her life. She would do anything to shield him from the consequences of his own evil temper ; and I am glad to add that her kindly influence and her unceasing affection mitigated, in some measure, the harsher characteristics in his nature. He became less cruel and revengeful ; but he never lost his glum moroseness of disposition. I have since come to know, with certainty, that Richard was the embodiment of the desperate straits to which both my father and mother had been reduced during his birth-year.

7. THE THIRD FARM AND THE THIRD SON.

“I do not know the year the third farm was bought. It sloped down to the river, the lower part of it being the most fertile land my father possessed. The brick residence—in Colonial style, with full, columned front like a state-house—stood on high ground amidst a splendid grove of maples, commanding a wide view up and down the valley, with the river, like a silver ribbon, winding through the green landscape. It had been owned by Colonel

Tucker—a veteran of the 1812 war—and he had spent a good deal of money on the property. There would have been a good deal of competition for Bloomfield had it not been for the proviso that the money must be paid at once. As it happened, my father was the only man in the district with the cash in hand and two farms unencumbered, so he got a great bargain in that purchase. Everything he now touched prospered. My father used to say : ‘Adversity is always intermittent, and therefore if effort is constant a man is bound to win.’

“My mother was delighted with the purchase of Bloomfield, and she moved with joy from the humble wooden house to the grand brick mansion overlooking the river. We now possessed a little estate of four hundred and eighty acres, running along the main road to the river, and the three farms were typical of my parents’ progress in life : Hardscrabble, the farthest from the river, being the poorest land ; but, starting at the most remote corner of the first farm and walking towards the ferry where the huge iron bridge now stands, the land became better and better, until the rich bottom soil of the valley was reached.

“A year and a half or thereabouts after the moving my younger brother was born in the old Colonial house. Charley, as he was universally called, came to be a favourite with young and old alike. He was ever irresponsible, kind, fun-loving, and reckless ; the life of whatever party he happened to associate with. No one could help liking him, yet his conduct caused my father frequent trouble and the outlay of various sums. The all-pervading mantle of a mother’s love covered the hare-brained younger son no less than it did the churlish elder.

“ Our mother died when Charley was in his twentieth year, and our father less than a twelve-month later. These two had been so knit together by the trials they had endured that although my father was bent more by early hardship than by weight of years, and although there was nothing perceptibly wrong with him, he became even more silent than ever, and loosened his hold on life as if by his own account. By his will, written with his own hand a fortnight after our mother’s death, he left each son the farm on which he was born.

“ As Bloomfield was more than double the value of my farm, and at least three times the worth of Hardscrabble, this would have been an unjust division, but my father equalized the bequests by leaving a large sum of money to us in a proportionate ratio. He added a clause to the effect that if one of us died, the property held by that one was to go to whichever brother was married, or, in case two were married, it was to be equally divided. Richard moved to the log cabin in Hardscrabble, and I took up my work in the frame-house, leaving^{ing} the brick homestead to Charley.

8. THE OUTBREAK OF THE WAR.

“ For nearly three years each of us went his own way. I saw less of my two brothers than of any of my neighbours. I was rather a plodder myself, making a very good living, but no more. My bank account increased rather than diminished, but not very fast. Richard kept to himself like a hermit ; Charley was here and there all over the country. If there was a dance anywhere within twenty miles, Charley was sure to be in the thick of it. He left farming to his hired men. And when I warned him

he laughed at me, smote me cheerily on the back, and called me, in the most affectionate way, 'Old-Stick-in-the-Mud.'

"Richard and he avoided each other. My old fear of Richard had long since faded away. I sometimes called on him in his log house, and I am sure he rather liked me in his gloomy way.

"The shadow of the approaching Civil War was now darkening the land. It was a period of doubt and apprehension. Charley was boisterous in his disbelief of any serious results. The common sense of the people would assert itself, he said, and all these blatant politicians would be thrust into the background. Richard said nothing, but a dull fire of hatred of the South burned in his sombre eyes. He bought a rifle and practised for the expected conflict.

"The night after Sumpter was fired upon Richard paid his first and last visit to my house.

"'John,' he said grimly, 'I am going to the war. I have drawn enough from my bank account to pay for my equipment, and have left a signed document with the manager giving you full control over the rest. Until I come back I leave everything I possess in your hands. I know you will deal as honestly with it as with your own.'

"He departed in the dark without further farewell or the shaking of hands. From that day to this I have neither seen him nor heard of him. I have no doubt he rests in an unnamed grave down South, probably one of the first victims of that terrible war, as my younger brother was one of the last.

"Charley laughed when he heard my somewhat solemn recital of Richard's leaving, but there

SAD STORY OF THE SECOND BROTHER 101

was a harshness in his mirth and a hardness in his words quite unusual.

“One day he drove over to my house in his two-seated, light buggy, unhitched the horse, and put him in my stable, though our houses were not twenty minutes’ walk apart. I came into the stable as he was shaking down some hay.

“‘Well, Johnnie, my boy,’ he cried with a hilarity which did not sound genuine, ‘I’m off to the wars, too, at daylight to-morrow, and I want to spend my last night with you.’

“I thought at first he was joking; but he was earnest enough, although he made a pretence of boyishness.

“‘Yes, Johnnie; there are girls want to marry me, I believe, but one in particular means business. I’ve told them at home that I’m off to Bunkersville. I hate a fuss; and she threatened to come down to the house to-night and take possession. You and I have some business to discuss, and in this place we can be at peace. I want you to take over my farm, Johnnie, while I’m away. You are the one man on this earth I can trust, and whatever you do will be right. I have no bank account to leave; but I’m sure you will run the farm better with one hand than I’ve been able to do with both.’

“We sat late that night, arranging affairs. Charley had spent all the money our father had left him, and was deeply in debt as well. His farm was mortgaged.

“At grey daybreak we left for Bunkersville, which was ten miles down the river. We had gone less than three miles when we saw a woman walking towards us. Charley recognized her, for he

pulled up sharply, swore under his breath, then laughed and drove on.

"The young woman stood still until we came up. Although she stood there so straight, I saw she was trembling either from rage or exhaustion.

" 'Well, liar !' she cried, in a high-keyed voice.

" 'Hello, Eloise ! Been out for a walk ?' asked Charley, with an air of indifference.

" 'Yes ; but now I'm going to ride with you.'

" 'There's only room for two in the buggy, Eloise.'

" 'I know it, Charley ; but I'll be one of the two.'

" Charley touched the horse with the whip. But the girl, with the litheness of a panther, sprang to the horse's head, seized the rein near the bit, and, with a strength incredible in one so slender, forced the frightened animal back, and threatened to upset us in the ditch.

" 'Do I ride with you, or wreck the buggy ?' she asked grimly. I jumped out and tried to soothe the horse, and extricate the vehicle from its perilous position.

" 'Answer !' she demanded of my brother.

" 'Jump right in, Eloise,' he said. 'I never pass a lady without offering her a ride. You were going the other way ?'

" 'I am going your way, whichever that is.'

" 'I'm for Bunkersville,' he said.

" 'So am I,' said she. They drove off together, he winking and grimacing at me over his shoulder.

" 'You'll have to walk, Johnnie. Good-bye, if I don't see you again !'

" He was never to see me again. When I reached the village I was told my brother and the woman had left on the train together.

9. THREE INTERVIEWS.

“ My two brothers had trusted me completely, leaving everything under my control, without even a scrap of writing in security. I was deeply touched by this, and resolved they should not suffer for their faith in me.

“ Monday and Tuesday I lived in Charley's brick mansion, and worked with the farm-hands, laying out their duties for the four days I should be absent. Wednesday and Thursday I lived in my own frame-house, and attended to my own farm. Friday and Saturday I camped out in Richard's log cabin, and looked after his interests. When in the brick house I viewed the world through Charley's eyes, took risks he would have taken, laughed at the men instead of censuring them.

“ Charley's farm prospered, and I soon paid off his mortgage, besides placing money to his account in the bank. Richard's farm was of much poorer quality, and there I had to drive the men to get the utmost out of it. My own property did fairly well.

“ One Saturday there was a fight at the Cross Roads Tavern between two men in my employ—Bates, who worked for me at Bloomfield, and Marshall, who worked for me at Hardscrabble.

“ The contest had been about me. Marshall proclaimed me a more disagreeable skinflint of a slave-driver than any our soldiers were fighting, while Bates upheld me as a model master, kind, cheerful, and generous. They fought over the question, and Marshall got the worst of it. This battle should have given me some hint of the terrible mental disaster I was preparing for myself.

“ My own actions next week might have shown me that already I was not one individuality, but three.

“ On Sunday afternoon I heard of the fight, and resolved to discharge both Bates and Marshall. This, while unjustifiable, was at least defensible. Monday morning I laughed at Bates’s black eye, and kept him on. Saturday night I discharged Marshall, with a bitter tongue-lashing. Before daybreak Richard’s barn was burned down, and the result of a year’s harvest destroyed. Everyone knew that Marshall had been the incendiary, but he was never caught. Why he didn’t burn my own barn puzzled the neighbours, but he had completely identified me with Richard.

“ We were on the eve of great changes ; and one of the indications of this was the coming of the first speculator I had ever met. His name was Morgan Peters ; and one Friday a boy drove him out from Bunkersville in a glittering new buggy. I was working on the ruins of the barn when he hailed me, and asked if I was Mr. Harmon. I neither looked up nor answered. In no way discouraged by this discourteous reception, he jumped from the buggy, climbed the rail-fence, and crossed the field to the spot where I stood.

“ ‘ Sorry to hear you’ve had a fire, Mr. Harmon,’ he began jauntily, ‘ but I’ve come to make you the greatest proposition one man ever made to another, and if you accept it you can build a hundred barns without feeling the cost. I’ve got an option on——’

“ ‘ Look here, Mr. Peters,’ I cut in, ‘ do you know the ground you’re on is private property ? ’

“ ‘ Of course,’ he cried, laughing loudly ; ‘ that’s why I’m here.’

“ ‘ That’s why you’ll be somewhere else, mighty soon ! You get over that fence within five seconds or I’ll help you over with the handspike.’ ”

“ On Sunday I began to have qualms about my treatment of the man, and on Monday was thoroughly ashamed, and would have gone to Bunkersville and apologized to him, but I knew he was a stranger from afar. On Wednesday he came again. I was in my cottage when I heard the buggy drive up. I went down to the gate and greeted him with civility. He cut short my apology with a flourish of the hand.

“ ‘ That’s all right,’ he said. ‘ I knew I’d made a mistake the moment I got back to town. Everybody laughed at me. “ You’re thinking of his brother Richard,” they said. “ John’s one of the quietest men in the district, and wouldn’t raise his handspike on his worst enemy—if he had one. Best-natured man in the county.” ’ ”

“ I quite believed the townsfolk had said this of me. I never went to Bunkersville on Richard’s days, and rarely even on my own. I generally did what business there was to be done in town on Monday and Wednesday. The people did not know me during the dark end of the week.

“ ‘ Now I’ll tell you what I came for. I’ve got an option on the Gaines Mill down the river, one of the best cloth factories in the State. Gaines is getting old, and he wants to pull out. I’ve got a patent for making cloth that will *look* as good as the best. Besides this, I stand in with one of the biggest firms of army contractors there is, and they’ll take all our output at a price that will leave us a few hundred per cent. profit. There’s half a dozen fortunes in the scheme. There will be clothing for

the troops wanted that will exceed any supply that is possible for years to come. The Government wants clothing *now* that it can't get. Why, Gaines' mill will be turning out hundred-dollar bills faster'n you can count 'em.'

" 'What's all that got to do with me?' I asked.

" 'I want you to come in with us. You've got the property—I offer you a five-thousand-dollar share. It'll be worth half a million in a year from now. It 'ud pay you to raise that money, if you gave a hundred per cent. for it.'

" 'I won't mortgage,' I said. 'I'm not a speculator.'

" He talked and talked ; but I was firm, and for the second time he drove away, asking me to think it over.

" On Monday I hitched up Charley's buggy, and went to Bunkersville. Halfway there I met Peters. He sprang from his buggy, took the vacant seat in mine, and we drove together to town. Once in Bunkersville, I found he had everything cut and dried, the papers all ready for signature, and next day he had the money.

" On Wednesday I began to doubt the wisdom of my action. Friday morning I was in the depths of despair, and drove to Gaines' mill, first begging the return of the money, then threatening. Peters was a clear-cut business man, hard as flint, who pointed out, most politely, that he had entered into contracts which made it impossible for him to refund a penny of the money.

" You will be prepared to hear that I lost my money through entrusting it to a sharp city chap ; but no ! Before the year was out I had cleared off the new five-thousand-dollar mortgage, and had put

to Charley's account upwards of fourteen thousand dollars; and when I sold my interest just before the war closed, there stood to my brother's credit what seemed to me the enormous sum of three hundred and six thousand dollars.

"I rebuilt the barn on Richard's farm, but it was destroyed by a tornado that scattered it, the log cabin, and most of the fences all up and down the land.

"A blight seemed to hang over Hardscrabble. I tried to sell the farm, but no one would buy. Ill-luck dogged me until Richard's money was all gone, and I had borrowed three thousand dollars from Charley's account. No one would lend money on the farm.

"As for my own fortunes they were those of the average farmer. I made money, but not much. When like to despair I was consoled by the knowledge that Charley would set everything straight when he returned. We heard much of him, and he had risen from the ranks to be one of Grant's most efficient and popular captains. At last came the longed-for news of peace, news blotted out for me by the announcement of Charley's death. He was among the last of Grant's men to fall; and this tragedy left me for the moment rich and stricken with grief.

10. THE ARRIVAL OF THE WOMAN.

"Charley was carried to his rest through a town gay with bunting heralding peace. The army was not yet disbanded, but an escort had accompanied their dead captain to his old home and his last home. But the uniformed company of honour was by far outnumbered by a pathetic military cortège com-

posed of the ill and the wounded from our part of the state—a limping procession ; men with empty sleeves pinned to their breasts ; men gaunt and sallow with fever. When the military band, with muffled drums, began the ‘ Dead March,’ it seemed to me I had reached the utmost depths of anguish a man can endure. Dimly I saw the silent, uncovered crowds on each side of the way. They mourned a fallen hero ; I mourned a lost brother.

“ As I stood by the open grave I became conscious of a tall, slim figure swathed in black on the other side. A young man, a stranger, stood beside her ; and when the ceremony was over he led her tottering to a carriage, shaken with sobs.

“ ‘ The widow ! The widow ! ’ I heard them whisper.

“ Two days later a messenger from town brought me a long envelope, which contained some legal papers. The lawyer informed me that they acted for Mrs. Charles Harmon, widow of the late Captain Charles Harmon, and they asked me to submit an account of the estate.

“ I consulted the only lawyer with whom I was acquainted, Bernard Southwood. I did not believe the woman had ever married my brother. It turned out she not only furnished ample proof, but held a will, made the day of the marriage, by which Charley bequeathed everything he possessed to her. I resolved not to contest the case, but delivered over to her representatives Charley’s farm and his bank balance, amounting to over 300,000 dollars.

“ When Richard was judicially declared dead, Johnson & Slater, the lawyers, requested quiet possession of Hardscrabble under the terms of my

father's will, which quiet possession was rendered by me. She had evidently been well acquainted with the position of our affairs.

"I was at peace for barely a fortnight. Messrs. Johnson & Slater announced that in going through the accounts they had discovered that a loan of 3,000 dols. had been made from Captain Harmon's account, which they wished me to refund. Southwood was indignant at this fresh demand.

"'It is absurd,' he said; 'they can't have it both ways, and they know it. We have been too easy with them. They will never take such a case into court; and if they did no jury would give them a verdict.'

"But they took it into court. The widow was there, in deep mourning, a superb actress, with black-bordered handkerchief almost constantly at her eyes.

"On Friday Lawyer Slater made his comment on the evidence. I sat near him, overshadowed by the profoundest gloom, hating every one there, but especially the tearful, black-robed woman. Half indistinctly I heard Slater say:

"'And this man—who sought the safety of the farm while his heroic brother answered his country's call, giving up his life for the nation, little dreaming that his bereft widow would be compelled to appeal to an honest judge and an upright jury to get those rights which a conscientious man would never have withheld—this craven slinker dares to come into court trusting to the law's uncertainty to cheat a helpless, widowed woman, whom he should have cherished; this knavish coward expects——'

"Black rage descended on me like a pall. I sprang to my feet to shake it off, as if it were some-

thing palpable, then launched myself at the lawyer's throat.

" 'You lying dog!' I shouted, and bore him, screaming, to the floor.

" If I had not been instantly torn from him, he would never have uttered another falsehood. Half a dozen excited men held me firm. The blackness that had obscured my sight disappeared, and I saw things as they were. The lady had fainted.

" 'I commit you to prison for seven days,' said the judge sternly.

" 'I respectfully submit, your Honour,' began Southwood, 'that the provocation given was unbearable. The whole county is aware that it possesses no more honest man than my unfortunate client, John Harmon. Within the last month he has voluntarily handed over to these people more than three hundred thousand dollars. He has——'

" 'I object to this line of argument,' interrupted Johnson.

" 'The line of argument your partner adopted would have been answered in some parts of this country by a pistol-shot,' replied Southwood hotly.

" 'Are you justifying your client, Mr. Southwood?' asked the judge.

" 'No, your Honour. I apologize to the Court on his behalf; and, knowing and esteeming him these many years, I am sure that no one will regret his ill-timed impulse more than himself.'

" 'I shall take the matter into consideration,' said the judge, more mildly. 'It was gross contempt, and cannot be condoned. I shall give my decision on Monday, when your client is to attend. Meanwhile he must withdraw from these precincts.'

SAD STORY OF THE SECOND BROTHER IIII

“ On Monday I was in court again, but what a change in the outlook ! It seemed ridiculous that I should have been offended at anything old Slater had said. The widow was a comic, not a tragic actress, and I wondered every person did not see through her amateurish art. The judge was delivering his address to the jury, upon whom the widow was concentrating her woebegone gaze. I heard the foreman heave a deep sigh, and the irresistible humour of the situation overcame me. I laughed outright. Every one was shocked, but I could not help it. They were such a befooled lot that their serious faces would have moved a statue to mirth.

“ The widow swiftly turned her regards from the jury to me ; then, with the superb abandon of a Mrs. Siddons, flung her arms on the table, and buried her face in them, wailing :

“ ‘ O God, when will Thy divine gift of laughter come to me again ? ’

“ It was magnificent, and I could but applaud ; while cries of ‘ Shame, shame ! ’ echoed through the room.

“ The jury found a verdict for the plaintiff, without leaving their seats.

“ Mr. Southwood was gathering up his papers as he said :

“ ‘ Your Honour, I give notice of appeal.’

“ ‘ There will be no appeal, Mr. Southwood,’ I cried. ‘ The whole thing is a farce ; and if the lady had prayed that the jury might be given the gift of laughter, it would have been a supplication to the purpose. All I need is a stout stick and a good road, which I hope will lead me to a community that has some sense of humour.’

112 SAD STORY OF THE SECOND BROTHER

“ Very soon the three farms and all their belongings were sold by auction. The widow married the young man who had been her companion in affliction, and the happy pair went to Canada, where I suppose they still live. Thus the results of hard work by two generations went to strangers in a strange land ; and some days the outcome seems to me laughable, and on others tragic.”

“ But you are still a young man, Mr. Harmon,” the farmer said, “ and may retrieve your misfortunes.”

The tramp shook his head.

“ If I were myself or either of my two brothers, yes. But I am a trinity. I cannot shake off the habit of the four fateful years. If I get a job on Monday I work energetically at it for two days, and my employer thinks he has found a treasure. The next two days he is not so sure. On Friday I abandon everything and take to the road again. On the last two days I would not believe in a Government bond, let alone in myself. Mine is a hopeless case, so we will talk no more about it.”

II. A BRILLIANT MONDAY MORNING.

When tardy daylight came on Monday morning it showed a changed world ; a world of iron powdered lightly with new snow. The marshes were full, and a hard frost had set in. Winter had closed down on the land with a grip of steel. The crisp air was like dry champagne, and the sun shone with a brilliancy unknown to summer. The saddened household that had gone to bed in gloom over the melancholy case of their guest, was awakened by the sound of a song, rollickingly rendered :

"The Union for ever !
 Hurrah, boys, hurrah !
 Down with the traitor
 Up with the stars !
 For we'll rally round the flag, boys,
 Rally once again,
 Shouting the battle-cry of freedom."

"Hello, farmer ! I'm ahead of you. How the frost cracked the timbers last night ! Nothing like a hickory fire on a morning like this when you once get it kindled. I've got the stove roaring for you. Good-morning, mistress. The kettle is just about to boil. I'm for an early breakfast this morning, and then for the road."

"You are welcome to stay longer," said the farmer.

"No, no ! I've important business ahead. I'm making for Cleveland, where Morgan Peters lives. He's a very rich man now, and I have a scheme to propose that will make me rich and him richer still. It's his turn to play capitalist to me. And he'll do it, for he's a first-rate fellow."

John Harmon greeted the children hilariously, and tossed the youngest to the ceiling. At breakfast his bright talk kept the youngsters in a gale of laughter, although father and mother took his raillery rather more soberly. At last the woman said :

"How much of your story told yesterday was true ? "

He laughed heartily.

"Well, mistress," he said, "in a way it was *all* true. I gave you the facts, but coloured them a dark blue, I fear. Then just think what a dismal day yesterday was, and as for the night before—

whew !—even Artemus Ward's choicest story would sound lugubrious from one who had been wet as a whale in that storm. I have my moments of dejection, it is true, but who has not ? And now I must be off ; and I shall never forget your generous hospitality. I'll return it some day, never fear."

The farmer and his wife accompanied the wayfarer to the gate, where he bade them a boisterous but kindly farewell. They watched him till he reached the hilltop, when he turned and waved his hat to them in most jaunty fashion, then disappeared down the other side.

"Well," said the farmer's wife, with a sigh, "I don't know what to make of him. That is the most remarkable man I ever saw."

"We've never seen him, my dear," replied the farmer. "His brother Richard and his brother Charley we have seen, but not John Harmon."

The King and the Smith

IT was probably as picturesque a blacksmith's shop as could be found in all England. Although within a stone's throw of Chevening village, the little hamlet could not be seen from its windows, because of the trees surrounding the shop. From its broad door might be viewed the ridge of the North Downs, rising some hundreds of feet above the level of the smithy, and heavily wooded to the summit. The large room, from whose wide doorway issued a clang of metal on metal, was more than a blacksmith's shop, for at the further end of it stood a furnace, with all the paraphernalia for the melting and casting of iron. Nearer to the door, one at either wall, had been placed two forges with a huge bellows to each and in the centre were ranged several anvils at two of which groups of blackened men were at work, foremanned by Robert Walker, expert ironworker.

In the centre of the hall, between the furnace and the door, three men were setting up an iron framework, which proved later to be the first metal printing press commissioned as a stalwart bond-slave of the world of letters. Overlooking their work was a tall, thin, ungainly man, past middle age, with a long face and a long nose, and a bare, partially bald head with tufts of hair turning grey

over the ears. His sleeves were rolled up to the elbows. In one hand he held a small hammer ; in the other a wrench. Sometimes he gave commands in a harsh and powerful voice that out-bellowed the din of the shop. At others he assisted now here, now there, with hammer or with wrench. He exhibited now and then a querulous impatience with the stupidity of his underlings, and his language on these occasions was more forcible than polite. A strenuous, quarrelsome, difficult man, an onlooker might correctly have judged him. He was coarsely attired, and a leather apron that half enveloped his body from chin to instep made him seem taller and thinner than was actually the case. This man, the chief and employer of the iron-working gang, was Charles, third Earl Stanhope, owner of those fair lands of Kent as far as the eye might reach. The House of Lords was in session in London, but he, one of its most distinguished members, had long tired of the talk ; perhaps because his own grotesque ideas were listened to with impatience by that august body, and he now turned his attention to the invention and manufacture of things here on his estate of Chevening, a fortunate blacksmith in this, that his livelihood did not depend on the strokes of his hammer.

He had been educated first at Eton, where they taught him he was a nobleman, then at Geneva, where they convinced him he was a man, and he held that everyone worthy of that name should work with his hands, and not live by the toil of others. Therefore he tried to persuade the House of Lords that it should be abolished, but the noble assemblage took little interest in his orations. His men, by order, called him Stanhope, and each in return

received sometimes his family, sometimes his Christian name. Indeed, when his lordship cursed one or other too strenuously, there were those bold enough to reply in kind, and at this the noble Earl grinned grimly, for he believed he had established an industrial community on terms of true equality.

He paid his men well, which was after all the main thing, and there was not a blacksmith in Kent but would have gladly donned the leathern apron for him in spite of his reputation as a quick-tempered, hot-headed man.

Notwithstanding the clamour of hammer and anvil, the Earl's attention was distracted from the press he was framing to an altercation going on outside the door of the shop, and striding forward he saw that a horseman, gaily accoutred, and quite evidently not of that locality, had entered at the Chevening gate, and was now drawn up in front of the blacksmith's shop.

"Get you back!" shouted the man on foot.
"This is no horse-shoeing forge!"

"My good fellow, I did not say it was," replied the horseman, with a smile of conscious superiority.
"If my horse needed the attendance of a smith, I should hesitate long before I entrusted him to such a motley lot of charcoal-burners as I find here. 'Tis your master I seek: tell me where to find him!"

"I have no master," replied the man gruffly.

"If you answer in that surly fashion, my good man, I shall temporarily take a master's place, and teach you manners with my whip."

"Get you to the high road," cried the masterless man, menacingly, advancing a stride or two

with clenched fists. "You have no right here, standing as you do on private property."

"Your master has taught you his whims as badly as he has schooled you in deportment. Learn, oh lowly hind, that there is no such thing as private property according to his lordship," and the horseman laughed derisively.

Earl Stanhope crossed the threshold of his shop and came outside.

"The stranger is in the right," he said to the defender of his domain. Then to the horseman: "Are you seeking me?"

"I am looking for Charles, Earl Stanhope."

"I am Charles Stanhope."

"And I, my lord, am a King's messenger. I bear his Majesty's command to Charles, Earl Stanhope, charging him to repair instantly to London, where his gracious Majesty, George, third of that name, awaits him."

The Earl frowned, and an exclamation of impatience escaped him. He turned his thin, eager face away from his interlocutor, and gazed with an expression of petulant regret at the iron framework he had left. Biting his lip in rebellious protest at this interruption, he stood a full minute in silence while the horseman, seated easily on his fine animal, smiled contemptuously as he regarded this recreant nobleman. At last the Earl spoke:

"You brought doubtless some proof more convincing than your own words that the King is desirous of seeing me?"

"I have two proofs, my lord," replied the messenger with a courtly bow. "The first I have now the honour of presenting to you." With that he

took from his pouch a parchment which he handed most deferentially to the noble blacksmith.

Stanhope glanced over the communication, then crushed the parchment in his hand, giving muttered utterance to a remark which, if it had been overheard, might have cast doubt on his loyalty and devotion to the King. Again the Earl paused, and again cast a longing glance at his shop. If he disobeyed the command thus placed before him in writing, he would gain, he estimated, two days before there could be another communication from London, nearly twenty miles away. Scowling up at the nonchalant Court official, the Earl spoke :

“ You said this was the first of your proofs : what is the second ? ”

The messenger replied with a sweet suavity in striking contrast to the Earl’s gruff remark :

“ The second, my lord, is a troop of horse, whose members number a score, who are now refreshing themselves in the village.”

In spite of the opinion of the House of Lords estimating him insane, Earl Stanhope possessed enough common sense to know that there comes a point when opposition to authority must cease, if a man would maintain his own welfare. He could, and probably would, have flouted the document—but a troop of horse cannot be crumpled up like a sheet of parchment, at least, not by a company of unarmed blacksmiths.

“ Walker ! ” he shouted ; then as that swarthy iron-master appeared at the door, “ get that frame together as well as you can. Consult my drawings if you find yourself at fault. I must go to London, and may be absent a day or two.”

Here the horseman’s smile broadened, for it had

been within his experience that a man answering such a summons had been detained longer than he expected.

"Tell Simpkins to saddle Disdain," continued his lordship, "while I wash myself."

With that he strode away, and the urbane King's messenger felt some misgiving lest he would return still in his leathern apron, for it was well known that the Earl had a great contempt for Court, and for the elaborate dandified costume of courtiers.

Earl Stanhope returned on horseback, very sombrely garbed, looking more like one of Cromwell's troopers than a member of the Upper House. When the two riders emerged from the gates of Chevening, and entered the hamlet, the troopers, who had refreshed themselves on good Kentish beer, fell in behind the pair, and thus the cavalcade proceeded to London.

During the somewhat tiresome journey the Earl remained silent and moody, maligning the fate that had drawn him away from an absorbing occupation at the moment when he was approaching the climax of interest. From his invention his sombre thoughts turned towards the King, wondering why he should thus be summoned to Court. He had heard that the King had been very ill, but he did not know—indeed, no one except those in the Royal entourage was aware of the fact—that his Majesty had been mentally deranged. Now it was said that the King had completely recovered, and there were great rejoicings throughout England, for George the Third was extremely popular with his subjects, being the first of his line born on English soil, and also the first who could speak with reasonable accuracy the language of the realm he governed.

Aside from this, he represented the opinions, and even the prejudices of the average Englishman in a way that few monarchs had ever done. His very stubbornness when hopelessly in the wrong endeared him to the populace, and, as they loathed what they considered the foreign profligacy of his eldest son, they heard with dismay of the King's serious illness, although ignorant of the form it had taken.

Evening had fallen, and lights were twinkling here and there when the gloomy eyes of the Earl rested on London. All the long way he had not spoken, and the gaily dressed cavalier by his side had been equally silent. He knew instinctively that the cross-grained blacksmith despised him as a social parasite, and suspected that he had to thank the troops clattering behind for the silent companionship of his lordship that evening. Before they reached London Bridge the King's messenger broke the stillness.

"My Lord Stanhope," he said, "probably you do not feel the need of a word of advice."

"I do not," gruffly responded the Earl.

"Nevertheless, I shall bestow it upon you, regardless of the scant welcome given everywhere to unsought counsel. I make no such mistake about you as you have made about me. I am in the trappings of my office. I try to do my duty, yet a single mistake may cost me my place. I live in the midst of uncertainty, and possess no landed estates to fall back upon. If, then, trouble comes to me, my lord, I intend to seek your aid, for I recognize you as a strong, determined man whose rough exterior covers a kindly heart."

"Humph," growled his lordship, gazing straight ahead as he had done throughout the journey.

"My lord, it is rumoured at Court that you believe all estates should be taken away from the nobles who hold them."

"I certainly so believe," responded Stanhope, and now he looked towards his companion with the light of proselytization in his eyes. Not even blacksmithing delighted his lordship so much as making a convert. "I can prove to you that no man should hold landed property."

The messenger waved aside the proof.

"To-day, for the first time in my life, I saw the fair acres of Chevening. I assure you there are many in London who covet them, and, my lord, you have but to say to the King what you have just said to me, and I surmise that Chevening will rejoice in a new and more appreciative owner to-morrow."

"Ah," said his lordship, the fire of enthusiasm dying down in his eyes.

"There was a time in the history of England," pursued the messenger, "when a man lost not only his estates but his head for giving expression to the views you hold. Your head is doubtless in no danger, but, my lord, if you will take the advice of a chance comrade, unwillingly traversing the road with you, ask yourself between here and the Palace whether or not you can make a livelihood at blacksmithing."

"I can answer that question at once by the simple word 'yes,'" responded Lord Stanhope, relapsing into silence again, a silence which was prolonged until they had reached their destination.

For many weary minutes Earl Stanhope was kept waiting in an ante-chamber, chafing at the delay, for he was resolved to return to Chevening that

night, even if they did not reach there until day-break. The natural impatience of a born inventor was augmented by the natural impatience of a noble who, despite his opinions regarding equality, chafed at being left to cool his heels in a deserted room.

At last he was sent for, and followed his leader from the dim and desolate apartment into the audience hall ablaze with light, and thronged by the members of a proud and haughty Court. Up the lane between two lines of resplendent personages in uniforms and Court dress, marched the titled blacksmith—looking neither to the right nor to the left until he came within a few paces of the throne on which sat George the Third, in all the sumptuous robes of his high office. Stanhope saw that this interview had been made an affair of State, and into his shrewd brain came again the warning of the King's messenger, yet he stood there, and did not kneel as would have done his father or grandfather. But now he looked at the King, and was shocked to see the change that had come over him since last they met. He seemed shrivelled in his gorgeous robes, and his hands trembled nervously one over the other. At first there was a deep frown on his brow, and he resembled one who had rehearsed a tableau, and was acting his part as best he could. But whether it was the gaunt appearance of the man he had summoned, his unusual tallness, or the homespun incongruity of his dress in such an assemblage, the frown departed, and a smile came to the King's lips; a wavering, pathetic smile, however, the smile of a broken man who had come up out of the Valley of the Shadow, and was not yet sure of himself. A wave of pity came over the Earl, and instantly he knelt on the polished floor.

"Ah, Charles," said the King in a quavering voice, "I am glad to see you again, but why—why—why have you come?"

"Your Majesty sent for me."

"Did I—did I?" asked the King, glancing from side to side almost with a look of fear. His trembling hand approached his temple and rubbed it gently as if to stir his memory. The official standing nearest to him whispered a word or two in his ear.

"Ah—yes—yes—yes," said the King, and again the frown furrowed his brow. "They tell me, Charles, that you say I should be abolished—I and my court. You have said it and written it. They—they showed me a letter."

"I hope your Majesty will be spared long to reign over Britain," said the Earl solemnly.

"There—there—there!" cried the King, with almost childish exultation. "I told you I knew Charlie Stanhope better than any of you."

Again there was a whisper in the King's ear, and again the frown came to the royal brow.

"But the nobles," said the King, "the rights of property——" The King stammered, and could go no farther, his eyes staring, and his hands agitated. Then the noble on his left spoke:

"Craving your Majesty's pardon," he said, "Lord Stanhope has already answered. His well-known loyalty to his King; the words he has spoken regarding your Majesty to-night, make further question unnecessary. The King, as the source of power, includes the nobility."

Charles Stanhope looked up in amaze. Incredible as it seemed, he had at least one friend at

Court. Yes, he had two, for a low voice came to him which said :

“ In God’s name, Stanhope, don’t play into their hands. I hope you’ve left your cursed opinions at Chevening.”

The King turned graciously to the man at his left, smiling again.

“ Yes, yes,” he said. “ Quite right—quite right,” when, for the third and last time, came the whisper to the right.

“ Speak up, my lord,” said the man to the left.

His lordship at the right hand of the King straightened his back.

“ Let Lord Stanhope speak up,” he said firmly.

“ Charles,” repeated the King, “ you would rob the nobility of their estates.”

“ Your Majesty, I hold that the robbery of any man, even a noble, is wicked.”

“ There ! ” cried the King, triumphant, turning to his right.

“ A plain evasion,” said the official lord.

“ No, no,” cried the King. “ Charles doesn’t evade. Come, come—come, we’ve had enough of this. Rise, Charles, I want a word with you in private. Take off these robes,” he cried impatiently, “ and get you gone, every one of you—all but you, Charlie,” and the King shook himself free of his environment of robes and courtiers.

The room emptied itself with the marvellous celerity that follows a Royal command. The King, disentrained of his heavy robes, stepped down to the floor, and taking Stanhope by the arm, they walked up and down the long apartment together.

“ I have been very ill, Charlie,” said George, with tears in his eyes. “ Did you hear of it ? ”

"All England heard of it, your Majesty, but, thank God, the joy of your recovery has blotted out the sorrow that the news caused."

"Yes, Charlie, I am well again; quite well again, and stronger than ever. But I'm fifteen years older than you, Charlie. We mustn't forget that."

"Your Majesty will outlive me," said the Earl, and in saying it, prophesied truly.

"I am glad you came to London, Charlie. How did it happen? Oh, yes, I remember. I sent for you. They say you have become a labouring man."

"I have always been that, your Majesty."

"They tell me you can shoe a horse."

"After a fashion, your Majesty."

"That is wonderful—wonderful. I can do nothing. Do you think I'm too old to learn?"

The Earl assured him that he was still a young man, and as they walked up and down together the King seemed marvellously to recover all his former strength and vivacity. He looked furtively around him to make sure they were alone, then, lowering his voice, said, to the astonishment of the Earl:

"I believe kings should be abolished, and nobles too, most of them. What have we done for England? I always intended to do my best for my people, yet we've had war after war, and I've lost America. What kind of king will my son make? Oh dear, oh dear!" and the monarch, withdrawing his hand from the Earl's arm, rubbed his hands one over the other in agitated despair. The tall, grim Earl stood looking fixedly at him. Here was a convert indeed! If he could bring the King to his views what might not happen. Chevening was well lost in such a triumph.

"I'd rather be a blacksmith and independent than be drawn this way and that, never knowing my true friends. Charlie," he cried, the fervour of insanity showing once more in his eyes, "I have thrown off kingship with those robes: I'll with you to Chevening. My arm is strong. I can wield a hammer. Come, let us go!" and with all the cunning of the madman, he seized the Earl by the hand, led him from the room through one passage after another, cleverly avoiding encounters with any one, until they were in the courtyard, and from there to the stables.

"I have left my horse at the——"

"Never mind, never mind," interrupted the King, "we shall have a carriage. Send for your horse some other time. Be my groom of the stables. Order a carriage and six horses. Tell them I'm going to Windsor."

The sombre Earl smiled. The idea of a man entering the smithy trade drawn by six horses appealed to his latent sense of humour. Not knowing the nature of the malady that had afflicted the King, and thus not realizing the true source of this sudden impulse, and himself by no means counted wholly sane by those who knew him, exalted by the thought of the eminence of the convert he had apparently made, Stanhope fell at once into the King's plans, and together they set out for Chevening. Most of the way the King, well wrapped, slumbered uneasily, while the tall Earl sat bolt upright before him, like a sinister crusader passing his night's vigil. It was after three o'clock in the morning when the ponderous equipage passed through the dim, deserted village, entered the gates of the park, and drew up before Chevening House.

The King aroused, chuckled to himself, ordered the horses to be concealed in the stables, and the carriage locked up in the coach-house. Furthermore, he commanded the Earl to imprison the postillions so that no one in London should suspect their whereabouts, and then his tired Majesty was conducted to his bedroom. His last request of the Earl, who *pro tem.* acted as the valet of the chamber, was that a suit of workman's clothes should be got for him in the morning.

It was late in the forenoon when his Majesty awoke, and was waited upon by the Earl in his leathern apron, for Lord Stanhope had contented himself with but three hours' sleep, and was in the forge before any of his men. He told his workers, when they assembled, that later in the day he expected to bring into the shop an apprentice, somewhat further gone in years than apprentices usually are, and therefore he wished him to be treated with consideration. This announcement was received without visible enthusiasm by the men. Although the Earl did not know it, they had formed themselves into a close association, the germ of that trade unionism which was later to permeate the realm. Their wages were so good that they looked with distrust on any interloper that came to share their recompense, and several who had hitherto attempted to join them, even with the countenance of the Earl, had unaccountably left the estate, much to the surprise of his lordship, who knew nothing of the treatment they had received in his absence.

It was ten o'clock when the King, in workman's clothes, entered the smithy, looking somewhat older than he actually was, and altogether rather an

indifferent specimen of the British working man. The smiths said nothing, but glancing at one another, intimated that they would have no trouble in ridding themselves of the latest recruit. The inefficiency of the newcomer aroused their contempt, and his temerity in calling the chief "Charlie" called forth their resentment, which speedily developed into jealousy when they saw the anxiety of the actual, although not nominal, master in hastening to the rescue of the awkward pupil, who seemed to be enjoying himself hugely, evidently looking on the serious smithy trade as a great practical joke. As the hour of noon approached the apprentice reached the climax of his iniquities by ordering Charlie to get him a chair, and when the Earl had obediently done this, the embryo smith sat himself down in it and said he was tired, and just a little sleepy. With this the Earl left the shop and went to the house, anxious about the forthcoming meal for his protégé. He had scarcely got inside when he heard a great outcry, which caused him to retrace his steps in a hurry, and there a startling sight met his view. The workmen were clustered into a thick bunch, and above their shoulders, chair and all, was seated the panic-stricken King. As Stanhope hurried forward to the rescue he was met and opposed by Robert Walker, the chief of staff.

"Do not interfere, Stanhope," said Walker. "This person is quite impossible, and the lads are determined to duck him in the village horse-trough. It will do him no harm, and cool his conceit. I beg of you—I beg of you!" he cried as the indignant Earl swept him aside.

"You can't stop them," cried the defeated

Walker, and the men shook their fists in defiance of the master-blacksmith. By his introduction and deferential treatment of this ancient curmudgeon he had violated all the unwritten rules of trade unionism, and his men were completely out of hand. The tall Earl grasped the first cudgel that lay to hand, and pursued the retreating company who were hurrying towards the village all the faster because their victim was shouting "Charlie—Charlie—Charlie!" and waving his hands like one of the windmills up on the downs.

"You scullions," roared the Earl, beating about him with his stick. "You gallows-earning traitors! This is the King!" and now he had to cleave his way quickly to the elevated chair or the terror-seized crowd would have dropped it and fled.

"Gently, gently, there!" shouted the Earl, and now the men handled his lord and monarch as if he were made of brittle glass. Several of them had said that they had seen the apprentice before, and one held he had been a vagabond that loitered round Sevenoaks, but instantly the word "King" was spoken they recognized the well-known face, and realized then the deference of their master. The King stood panting, still terrorized, clinging to the arm of Lord Stanhope, but his fear was as nothing to that of his late assailants. A wholesale paralysis seemed to have overcome them, and terror-caught as they were, no man moved until one took off his cap, and the rest followed suit. And now, alas! for the Earl's teaching of equality, Robert Walker dropped on his knees, and instantaneously each man in the crowd did likewise, a groan of dismay and humble loyalty rising from the kneeling group.

"Charlie," said the released monarch with a grimace, and a rather uncertain laugh, "I seem to be more of a success as a King than as a blacksmith. I always knew I was popular with the people. While they're of that mind, Charlie, I think my trade's better than yours, and I should be rather foolish to exchange. I am glad we didn't send the carriage back to London last night. Release the postillions, Charlie, and tell them to get out the horses."

When the great State carriage was brought out with the half-dozen superb horses and the no less gorgeous postillions, splendour of display left no doubt in the mind of even the most sceptical that it was indeed George the Third who had visited them. The only problem that now tormented their minds was whether they would be drawn and quartered before or after the hanging. But the good-natured King gave them his blessing, refusing to stay for refreshment, saying he had had breakfast so late he would travel further for his lunch. Lord Stanhope threw off his apron, donned his long black coat, and got in beside the King, who, indeed, insisted on his company, and seemed uneasily anxious to get away as quickly as possible from his too demonstrative subjects. As the men realized that no penalty was to follow they raised a lusty cheer, and as the State carriage drove off, shouted "God save the King!"

"Indeed," said George, with a chuckle, "it is what I thought of crying myself a short time since."

The Bank Manager

JOHN MURDOCH, manager and chief proprietor of Murdoch's Bank, Limited, in the little country town of Chelsingham, a hundred miles or so north of the metropolis, did not start, gasp, or even change colour as he realized that the long tension had ended, and that, at last, the crisis was upon him. The conversation between him and his cashier had been the usual morning talk, pertaining to the commonplace routine of banking; a consultation similar to those that had taken place daily any time these past five years. A very shrewd observer might have seen that the two men were antagonistic; that they disliked each other with a mutual distrust, but the words that had passed between them had been quite frigidly correct. The interview came to its logical end, but William Randall, the cashier, made no motion to leave the manager's private room.

The keen, calm, smooth-shaven face of the manager turned toward his subordinate, and the latter, moistening his lips, said somewhat huskily:

"Mr. Murdoch, I wish to speak with you regarding that package of bonds in the strong room."

The person addressed did not flinch, and when he spoke his voice was without a tremor, as he asked a question that seemed to his opponent strangely irrelevant.

“ At what hour do you dine, Mr. Randall ? ”

“ Seven o’clock,” was the curt reply.

“ I am very busy to-day,” the manager said serenely, “ and will not be at leisure until long after closing time. Would it be convenient for you to see me, say at half-past eight to-night, in the directors’ room ? I shall leave word with the watchman to admit you at that hour.”

“ Why in the directors’ room ? ” asked Randall suspiciously. “ Why not here ? ”

“ Because I expect to be at work in this room until midnight. I am rather a methodical man, as you know. The documents with which I shall be engaged are important and confidential. Aside from that, you will come in by the private entrance to the bank, and must, therefore, pass through the directors’ room. I prefer to leave this office undisturbed, and meet you in the larger apartment which opens directly from the hall.”

“ It does not matter in the least to me,” said Randall, who in an endeavour to summon up his courage rather overdid it, and spoke almost with an air of bravado. “ If you think to conceal a witness in here while we are conversing in the adjoining room I have not the slightest objection, but I think you will regret it.”

“ In that case,” replied the manager, “ I shall take every precaution to assure myself there are no eavesdroppers about. Half-past eight is the time. Good morning, Mr. Randall.”

The cashier hesitated for a moment, but he saw that the manager was already absorbed in the papers before him, so he turned and tiptoed out of the room with the noiseless step which custom had formed into a habit.

English bank managers accord with reluctance a personal interview to an important customer. They prefer that all dealings with the bank should leave written documents in their trail. You cannot file away a conversation for future reference.

Ten minutes after the cashier had departed John Murdoch locked away his papers, put on his hat, and left the bank by way of the private entrance. If Randall had seen him go, which he did not, he would have been helpless, being unable to follow his chief, for a bank holds its cashier prisoner until four o'clock.

At eight that night the directors' room lay gloomy and methodical. The door between it and the manager's private office opened, and John Murdoch entered, standing for a few moments in the darkness and the silence. A fire burned in the grate and threw a fitful, ruddy radiance that did little to dispel the murk. Murdoch's hand stretched out to the electric button by the side of the door through which he had entered, and instantly the room was flooded with the glow of electricity coming from a chandelier of many bulbs that depended from the ceiling.

The manager stood there looking at the furniture as if he had never seen it before. The main body of the room was occupied by a long, heavy, mahogany table, covered almost to its polished edges with dark-green leather. Neatly placed at each end and in the middle were oblong pads of unblemished, white blotting-paper, and situated in the centre of each pad stood a round, heavy inkpot of pewter, garnished with two quill pens and two steel pens attached to ordinary wooden handles. Accurately distanced, shoved under the table, were six maho-

gany leather-covered chairs, three on either side. These, with two chairs, one at each end of the table, completed the seating capacity of the room.

Upon the mantelpiece at the end of the room where the manager stood sat a squat, plain clock of black marble, and its faint ticking was the only audible sound. There were two large windows, heavily curtained, in the wall to the right of the fireplace, and the four walls were panelled in oak, unornamented either by pictures or maps.

Although the eyes of the manager looked upon this prim formality, he was accustomed to its air of stolid respectability, and, indeed, saw nothing of it now, for his whole strong nature was concentrated in thought. John Murdoch was forty-six, with closely-cropped hair slightly sprinkled with grey. His masterful face, which was deeply lined, gave token of power, and, even though he knew himself to be alone, there was no relaxation of his habitual self-control.

He walked toward the farther door that led into the passage, and locked it. He tested the electrical turn-knob at this end of the room by putting out the light and setting it ablaze again. Returning to the fireplace, he pulled out the heavy chair from that end of the table, and, setting it down with careful precision almost against the end wall, he sat down facing the distant locked door that led into the passage. Reaching out his right arm, he found he could not touch the corner of the table, so shifted his chair a little to make this adjustment possible. Kneeling down, he passed his fingers along the surface of the heavy carpet until he discovered what he sought, whereupon he took a

piece of chalk from his pocket and marked a white cross on the dull red of the carpet.

Sitting down once more in his chair, he placed his right foot lightly over the chalk mark, drawing his chair forward a trifle, so that the position of his legs seemed carelessly natural. Glancing up at the chandelier, he pressed down his right foot, and instantly the electric lights went out ; another pressure, and they were burning again. With a slight sigh of relief, or admiration at the mechanical perfection, he rose, and directed his attention to the three other chairs on that side, pulling the first back from the table until its seat had almost emerged from under cover ; the second he set about four feet away from its customary place ; the third he drew out farther than the first, but not so far as the second. He now walked the length of the room, zigzagging among the chairs. They made the stage setting of an obstacle race on that side of the table, and presented an appearance of careless disarray, as if a board of directors had, upon dissolving their session, left them there, and no servant of the bank had yet replaced them.

The three chairs on the other side of the table he drew out in somewhat similar fashion, but paid no such minute attention to their arrangement. The chair near the locked door he drew out and placed in such a position that a man occupying it would face him seated at the farther end of the room.

He now knelt down at the farther end of the table and satisfied himself that there was a clear passageway underneath to a man crawling on his hands and knees. This done, he unlocked the outer door, returned to the chair by the fireplace, sat down upon it, saw that his right foot almost inadver-

tently fell upon the chalked cross. He took an evening paper from his pocket, and began to read, as if nothing interested him but the doings of the day. The heavy clock behind him chimed the half-hour, and almost before the subdued, mellow tones died away there came a sharp knock at the outer door.

"Come in," cried John Murdoch.

William Randall entered and closed the door behind him, but instead of greeting his overseer he turned his back upon him and took out the key from the lock. The visitor faced about, showing himself to be a man approaching thirty, with a crafty face, blond moustache, shifty, uneasy eyes, and light, curly hair, rather foppishly parted in the centre. The cashier began the conversation in a tone of truculence, as if hoping to cow his adversary at the outset :

"You will, perhaps, excuse me, Mr. Murdoch, if I leave open the line of retreat. I do not intend that by any chance this door shall be locked upon me."

"You are right to take every precaution," replied the manager calmly. "You may put the key in your pocket until our conference is ended."

Randall slid the key into his trousers pocket and advanced to the chair that had been placed for him. Resting his hand on its back, he said :

"I think, Mr. Murdoch, in spite of the fact that you closed our interview rather abruptly this morning, you nevertheless know why I am here."

He paused for reply, but Murdoch made none, merely elevating his eyebrows, so Randall continued :

"For three months past you have quietly watched me."

"You think so?"

"I am sure of it."

"I must have done it very clumsily, then."

"So I determined there should be no more beating about the bush."

Murdoch inclined his head, but made no comment.

"For a good deal longer than three months I have been watching you, Mr. Murdoch," continued Randall.

"It seems to have been a case of diamond cut diamond."

"Rather, diamond cut glass."

"Perhaps you are right. Proceed, if you please."

"I proceed by placing my cards on the table."

Saying this, Randall took from his coat pocket a revolver, and placed it, with hesitation, on the blotting-pad before him, looking defiantly at the elder man.

"An excellent example. I shall follow it," commented the manager, pulling open a drawer at the end of the table and taking out a revolver. As he did this, Randall, panic-stricken, sprang upon his own, and pointed it at Murdoch, shouting:

"None of that! Hold up your hands! Up with your hands, or I shoot."

"Don't you see I am grasping the weapon by the muzzle? If you place your cards on the table, and claim credit for doing so, you should not attempt to play them until your opponent is ready."

Saying this, Murdoch slid the pistol along the table toward the young man, as if putting a curling-stone. Randall lowered his revolver, and seemed for the moment to be taken aback, but he pulled himself together, and observed:

"You may have another in that drawer, for all I know."

Murdoch, in answer, drew out the drawer entirely and upset it on the table. A few card photographs dropped out, and it quite evidently contained nothing else. The manager carelessly threw in the pictures, and replaced the drawer.

"Perhaps there is a weapon in your coat pocket," still objected the cashier.

Murdoch soberly, patiently, turned his pockets inside out, then sat down again.

"You seem a little nervous, Mr. Randall," he said with no hint of resentment. "I give you my assurance there are no firearms in this bank except those now in your own possession. If it will satisfy your mind and make our conversation less intermittent you are quite at liberty to search the room. I beseech you to handle my revolver with care, or it may inadvertently go off. Should that be the case we are in danger of being interrupted. If you have anything of moment to say I presume you do not wish our conversation broken in upon. You may sit down, Mr. Randall."

"Thanks, thanks, but I think I'd rather stand, if you don't mind."

"Oh, I don't mind in the least; but, if I may make a suggestion, I should like to point out that this is the directors' room of a bank in Chelsingham, a very sleepy and conventional country town belonging to the Midlands of England. You rather give one the impression that we are in Arizona."

"I am the best judge of what is necessary for my own protection."

"Quite so, quite so; but, even in that case,

I think I can give you two hints. First, you should never shout, 'Hold up your hands!' because you might be shot several times before you finished the phrase. I believe that among modern train robbers it is now etiquette to say simply the one word 'Up!' My second hint is this: You should have kept a cocked revolver in your coat pocket, then, if you found it necessary to shoot me, it could be done without any outward motion, thus taking your enemy completely unawares."

"You seem to be well versed in the methods of highwaymen."

"Yes; I have read a good deal about them."

"Are you sure that you didn't learn from experience?"

"You mean that I am a robber?"

"You are a robber, Mr. Murdoch."

"Ah, then I don't wonder that you feel nervous about intrusting yourself alone with me."

"I am not nervous, and I am not afraid of you. I've got you like that!"

Randall raised his hand in the air and clenched his fist.

"My dear fellow," murmured the manager wearily, "let us avoid melodrama, if we can."

"Do you deny it?"

"I neither deny nor affirm. I am here to listen, if you can prevail upon yourself to come to the point."

"Have I not come to the point?"

"You have made an accusation. I am anxious to hear on what foundation it is based."

"An honest man would have knocked me down if I had called him a thief, and added that he was a hypocrite and a liar."

"I couldn't knock you down with such a length of table between us, and two or three chairs standing in the way. Are you afraid to sit down?"

"No, I am not."

The cashier sat down on the chair previously placed there for his convenience, rested his elbows on the table, with a revolver in each hand.

"Would you be so good as to put my revolver in your coat pocket," begged Murdoch. "I think you do not appreciate the delicacy of the weapon. It is of the most modern make, and can be shot off six times while you are cocking yours."

"You spoke of my being nervous, but you seem very anxious there should be no noise in this room."

"For your sake only. If you bring a third person to our conference it may be the worse for you."

"I possess documents that will protect me."

"Very well; why trouble me? Take your documents wherever you like, and use them as you please. I suppose, from what you said this morning, that you wished to come to some understanding with me. It would seem, from what you say to-night, that you have discovered me to be a criminal. If that is the case, and if, as you hint, you hold proof, there are two courses open. Premising you an honest man, the first course is to the police station. If you are a rogue, the second course is to learn how much I will pay for your silence. You can't both have your cake and eat it. Make up your mind which method to adopt, and let us get done with the business as speedily as may be."

"You are my elder in experience and my better in position," said Randall, rising again. "What do you advise me to do?"

"As your elder and superior in every way I advise you to go to the police station."

The young man started toward the door, but paused when he was half-way to it in hesitation, and turned around, saying:

"That's bluff, you know."

"Is it? Well, the way to call it—I believe that is the phrase—is to follow my suggestion."

"Look here, Mr. Murdoch, don't be a fool."

"Really, Mr. Randall, you expect too much of me. With such an example before me how can I help it?"

"I say," cried the young man impulsively, ignoring the insinuation, "are you willing to come to terms?"

"Of course. If I find myself in a difficulty I always take the easiest way out, but first I must be very certain about the difficulty."

"All right. There will be no trouble on that score." He put the manager's revolver into his coat pocket, still holding the other in his right hand, and then sat down. "About two years and a half ago, in other words, six months before the bank panic, Colonel Marshall came to this neighbourhood and bought the estate of Highbriars."

"Quite right. He borrowed money from the bank to pay for the property, having been offered quite exceptional terms on condition of prompt cash. He left with me bonds to the value of forty thousand pounds. During the panic there was a slight run on the bank, and with Colonel Marshall's consent, together with the concurrence of the directors, I took those bonds to London, endeavouring to raise money on them, but did not succeed. Is that the transaction to which you refer?"

"Oh, that was all straight enough," said Randall, smiling sarcastically, and half-closing his eyes; "but you found times so stringent in the money market that you could not raise a loan upon them. Argentine bonds were not saleable in such a crisis."

"How do you know they were Argentine bonds?"

"Because later, when I acted as your messenger between Cheltenham and London, I opened the packet, in spite of its being closed by the bank seal. My curiosity was aroused, because when I left that morning for the city a brown paper packet of the same size, with the same kind of seals on it, was still in the safe. I suspected you had stolen forty thousand pounds' worth of bonds, and, I suppose, not daring to go yourself, you sent me to London with them."

"You opened them on the way?"

"Yes; I got a compartment to myself on the train, and satisfied my doubts regarding the packet. Since then I have taken the trouble to open the packet now in our vaults, and find that it contains merely blank bond papers."

"Ah!" Murdoch took a cigarette out of his case, rapped the end on the table to clear it of dust, placed it in a cigarette holder and lighted it, throwing the match behind him into the fire.

"I suppose you lost the bonds in speculation." Randall went on; "but, be that as it may, they have never come back to this bank, and the packet now resting in our safe contains only worthless paper. Colonel Marshall is an old fool, whom you have flattered by making one of your directors, and who has such misplaced confidence in a robber that he has never made any investigation. What have you to say to that, Mr. Murdoch?"

“What have I to say? Why, that you have waited too long, my shrewd cashier and accountant. Of course, persons who engage in such transactions as I did, usually do lose the securities they have hypothecated, yet, I dare say, there are many instances where the reverse occurs, and these the public never hears of. In this case, Mr. Randall, you have waited till I tided over the crisis. I don’t attempt to justify my action. I didn’t speculate; I played on a certainty. The short panic caused a slump in all stocks; they sold far below their actual value. From inside knowledge I was aware that, because of the banks standing together, there would be no real crash. Although during those few days while the panic lasted I was unable to raise money on Colonel Marshall’s bonds, I found no difficulty in getting what I wanted after the immediate scare was over, but before those valuable stocks had recovered. I got the money, put it all straightway into what it would buy of first-class securities, used these securities to obtain more money, and so on. If things went as I expected I should clear a million, and be enabled to place my bank upon such a foundation that the next panic would not shake it, as was the case two years ago. As it happened, I did make the million. Colonel Marshall’s shares are now in the safe again. I placed them there myself, after our brief interview earlier in the day. I withdrew and destroyed the bogus packet you have mentioned.”

“So you put the real bonds back in the safe?”

“Yes.”

“Since I spoke in there to you this morning?”

Randall pointed to the door of the private room.

“Yes.”

"Then you knew my purpose in coming here to-night?"

"Yes. I have been watching you, as you surmise. I wondered why you did not spring long ago."

"Are you quite certain I cannot spring now?"

"A man can be certain of nothing in this delusive world. You were certain a moment ago that the bogus packet still rested in the safe."

"Nevertheless, you did speculate with Colonel Marshall's property."

"If you call it speculation," said Murdoch with a shrug of the shoulders. "I was sure to win."

"Every criminal says that."

"Well, this criminal was right."

"You would have made a very clever sleight-of-hand man. Are you convinced that you have forgotten nothing?"

"I may have forgotten something. One generally does."

"I think you overlook the fact that although a crime is successful and concealed, although restitution is made surreptitiously, yet if the misdemeanour can be proved the culprit does not escape."

"Doubtless that is true; but I think the law is rather lenient in a case such as you suggest. Still, never mind that. Everything has been squared up. Colonel Marshall is not a penny the worse. No one has lost anything through my conduct. Therefore nothing remains but to make terms. You have been supremely clever, hedging me round so completely that there seems actually no avenue of escape. What is the price of your silence, Mr. Randall?"

"I wish the bank to guarantee me during life two hundred and fifty pounds a year."

"About five pounds a week, eh? You wouldn't accept my surety, I suppose, and leave the bank out of the question?"

"No; I insist upon this as a sort of pension from the bank."

"I see. You resign, of course. Ground of ill-health. Desire to go to New Zealand or to Canada. Grateful bank recognizes faithful service. Presents flattering certificate of good conduct. Benevolently grants a pension of two hundred and fifty a year. Yes, I think that can all be managed, Mr. Randall."

"So much from the bank."

"Ah, so much from the bank! Then there is more to come, I take it."

"From you I demand forty thousand pounds cash down, the value of the bonds you stole."

"Forty thousand pounds? I couldn't consent to that."

"Guess again."

"It isn't a guess. It's a certainty."

"I thought you said there were no such things as certainties."

"This is the exception that proves the rule."

"You won't pay it?"

"No; and I'll tell you why. You refused to accept my guarantee for the annuity. I refuse to take your word regarding my own future immunity. Your judgment is poor."

"Oh, is it?"

"Yes. Also your sense of justice is weak."

"Justice! Really, and this from you!"

"This from me. Your sense of justice is weak,

because it does not recognize that, although I took securities worth forty thousand from the bank, I have restored them, so it is harsh and unfair to compel payment twice."

" 'Compel' is the proper word to employ."

"That is why I used it. But to return to your judgment. Even if I waive the injustice of your claim, and pay the money, I should rest under no sense of security. You would plunge into the stock market with your forty thousand, and being a fool——"

"A fool! Be more careful of your phraseology, Mr. Murdoch, or I shall raise my terms. Civility costs nothing, you know."

"It appears to cost you an effort. But, as I was about to say, you'd lose the forty thousand pounds and then return to me for another instalment. The one assured thing about blackmail is——"

"Blackmail? I've warned you once——"

"Let us call it, then, the exacting of involuntary contributions. The one thing that you can prophesy about it is that the exactor will return. I therefore refuse to pay you forty thousand pounds, or any other sum, and advise you to be content with the two hundred and fifty a year."

"It's no use, Murdoch. Squirming will do no good. You daren't face publicity, and you know it."

"Won't you take into account, what is the strict truth, that I acted largely for the benefit of the bank, and for the future welfare of its stockholders, who have intrusted me with the management of affairs? Even you must admit that my intentions were good."

"Piffle! Hell is paved with good intentions."

"No. The road to hell," corrected Murdoch.

"Your intentions were just the same as those of any thief who takes what doesn't belong to him and speculates with the proceeds. The intention is to enrich himself, making secret restitution if he succeeds."

"It rarely pays, Randall, to push a man to the wall."

"I don't push you to the wall. I'm letting you down easy. You acknowledge that you have made a million, and most men would have demanded an equal share."

"But I took all the risk."

"Yes: and I gave you all the rope you needed, not jumping on you when you might have been embarrassed. I waited until I knew you had been successful, although, of course, until you confessed I had no idea you made so much money. Now, I put it to you, what's a beggarly forty thousand pounds out of a million?"

"I never heard that sum of money called beggarly before. It's an outrageous amount to demand."

"Outrageous or not, you must pay it. You say I take no risks, but that is not true. I am compounding a felony, and a remark you made just now shows that I am in danger of being charged with attempting blackmail."

The manager of the bank pondered deeply for a few moments with bowed head, then looked up and said: "Randall, there is just one chance in a thousand that, when you understand the circumstances of the case, you may be content with the annual allowance which I am willing to settle upon you."

"You mean which the bank is willing to settle on me."

"It is the same thing. You will receive the guarantee of the bank, but I shall recompense the shareholders either by paying the annuity myself, or, more likely, in some other fashion. You see my point of view, I hope. If I once consented to pay money to you personally I should then place myself entirely in your hands."

"You are entirely in my hands now."

"What I mean is that this personal payment from me to you would be evidence of my guilt, but, by arranging it as a form of pension through the bank, proposed by one director, seconded by another and carried by the board, in whose decision I merely acquiesce, that is quite a different and perfectly innocent matter."

"Very well. Arrange that the bank pays me the forty thousand also. I don't care how it's done so long as I get the money."

"What excuse could I give for the payment of an amount so excessive?"

"That's your look-out. To make your path smooth is no affair of mine."

"I am trying to persuade you toward a course that is reasonable—I may add, toward a course that is possible."

"Then pay the money yourself. What's the use of making such a fuss over forty thousand pounds? You confessed to making a million, and the sum I ask is merely four per cent. on that amount for a single year. You disgust me with your penuriousness. I'm letting you off cheap, if you only had the sense to see it."

"It is not penuriousness. I see my own position,

and I am determined that, when I make a settlement, it shall be a final one."

"You *must* make a settlement."

"I know that, and I will, but, if I give you the forty thousand, I am a doomed man. You will lose the money, and come back for more, finding me, because of this payment, at a greater disadvantage than I am now."

"How can you be at greater disadvantage?"

"Because to my present disadvantage you will have the additional proof that I paid this large sum of money. Don't you see that I dare not pay what you require?"

"But you must."

"I suppose any appeal to you would be quite in vain?"

"Quite. There is no sentiment in business, you know."

"Think what this bank means to me. It was handed to me unsmirched by my father, and to him by his father. In three generations it has never incurred an obligation which it did not fulfil. The nearest it came to default was under my hand in the panic two years ago; and I risked my liberty that such a crisis could not occur again. I took every precaution against discovery, but you were too clever."

"Look here, Murdoch, you make me tired. You're in business to make money; so am I."

"I assure you, Mr. Randall, that the honour of this bank is part of my being. My feeling toward the bank is hereditary. It has descended to me as the bank itself did."

"Rubbish! A common thief talk about honour! Really, Murdoch, you astonish me. I did think

you had some backbone, and I was under the impression that you were a man of brains. You are treating me as if I were a child, to be influenced by fairy stories."

"Very well, then," said Murdoch with a sigh; "I'll tell you a story, but, as you are not a child, this anecdote will deal with the actual and not romance. It will be more in the nature of a detective story, which I understand is very popular."

With this the manager opened the drawer in the end of the table, and as he did this Randall sprang up.

"None of that, you hound! Tell your story if you like, but I'll have no premature *dénouement*. At the first suspicious movement on your part I'll shoot you like a dog."

"That would be foolish," retorted Murdoch very quietly; "for, besides destroying me, you would destroy all chance of making that money which you say is your object in life. Your memory appears to be defective. I proved to you that this drawer contains no weapon, but only a parcel of photographs. The time has come to use them, for this is an illustrated story, and I am merely getting the materials."

John Murdoch took out the photographs and arranged them as a player sorts out a hand at cards. Randall slowly and suspiciously resumed his seat, slipping the revolver into his pocket. Strive as he would, he could not overthrow the fear that the elder man, although guilty, would, somehow, trap him.

The manager selected the uppermost picture, and with a flirt of the hand sent it spinning down the table.

"Did you ever see that man?" he asked.

"No, I didn't," replied Randall sullenly.

"He was a friend of my younger days and an actor of great talent. He played one season with Henry Irving, but, as you see by that picture, consumption had him in its grip. Since my early days I have made few friends, and this man was the prince of them all—a person absolutely trustworthy. I shall not mention his name, and will merely add that he died last year, when money had done everything for him that it could. So you see, Randall, money is not all-powerful, even though you and I run great risks to obtain it."

"Oh, come off! I'm not here to listen to sermons."

"You are not, so I shall stop preaching and get on with my narrative. It will interest you before I am finished."

Saying this, Murdoch tossed another photograph down along the table.

"Do you recognize that old gentleman?"

"Yes. This is the ancient duffer to whom I handed the packet of your stolen bonds in London."

"True, and he is also the same person whose photograph you did not recognize. Look at the excellence of his make-up. You would almost swear that was General Booth, wouldn't you? Now glance at the third photograph: it is a snapshot" (sliding it to him). "Who's that chap?"

"This is a photograph of myself."

"Quite right. It was taken just before you entered the house near the British Museum where my long-bearded, disguised friend was awaiting you. In the little handbag you carry reposes the packet

of bonds you had opened. Those railings behind you surround the British Museum."

"What are you driving at?" demanded Randall.

"Do you recognize the fourth photograph?" asked Murdoch, ignoring the question, as he flipped the picture down to his visitor.

"Yes, this is also a photo. of me."

"Are you quite sure?"

"Yes, but I don't know where it was taken."

"It is another photograph of my friend the actor, who used an enlargement of the snapshot taken of you against the railings of the British Museum. My poor friend would be delighted if he knew his success was such that even the victim did not recognize the difference. You see, the enlargement showed every wrinkle of your costume so accurately that when a tailor saw it he selected the cloth and made a suit so like the one you were wearing that even your scrutinizing, spying eyes are at fault."

"What do you mean, anyway?" cried Randall, half rising.

"I *thought* the story would interest you. Sit down and peruse this document. It is merely a copy, so no useful purpose will be served if you should tear it up. Read it aloud, and I will explain anything you don't understand."

The young man sat down and read the letter:

To the Manager of the London and Tropical
Bank.

OLD BROAD STREET,
LONDON, E.C.

SIR,—

In reply to yours of the 25th I beg to state that William Randall is cashier of this bank, and is,

so far as I know, a capable and industrious young man. I see no reason why you should hesitate to open an account with him, and the fact that he has been my cashier for three years answers your question regarding his trustworthiness.

Yours most sincerely,

JOHN MURDOCH.

After reading this letter Randall glared at Murdoch with wide open eyes, then stammered :

“ I—I never opened a bank account in London, nor authorized any one to ask for a reference.”

“ The manager of the London and Tropical will swear that you did,” Murdoch assured him suavely. “ Although two years have passed, he will doubtless remember both you and your account, for, from what my friend told me of his conversations with the manager, that shrewd man was a trifle uneasy. You spun him a plausible yarn, however, about a rich uncle of yours, a cattle-dealer in Argentina, who died, leaving you forty thousand pounds’ worth of Argentine stock. You supported this statement by the exhibition of letters and documents, and wished to draw at once thirty thousand pounds, leaving this stock as security, but were forced to content yourself with twenty-five thousand. This amount you received in notes, and these notes you changed to gold at the Bank of England, which bulky treasure, weighing something like four hundred and forty pounds, you took away with you in a closed cab. I dare say the bank manager wrote to Argentina to verify your statements, but before a reply was possible you had closed your account with the London and Tropical, paying in gold, releasing and taking away your stock, and with

that, of course, the interest of the manager in you and your account ceased. The Stock Exchange transactions were carried on through various brokers, and I am not sure that they can be traced, but, if tracing is possible, it will lead up every time to you."

During this recital Randall had risen to his feet, and stood rigid, with clenched fists on the end of the table.

"You—you scoundrel! You thought to prove me the thief!"

"Yes, if you ever attempted blackmail."

"There is certain to be a flaw somewhere in that string of lies."

"It is very likely, although I have used very great care, and time and time again have examined each separate link in the chain."

"But you certainly possess the money. On cross-examination how could you account for the fact that you are a millionaire?"

"I cannot be called to account for it, because, if my private affairs are examined, it will be shown that, except in so far as the bettering of the bank's position is concerned, I am poorer than I was two years ago."

"Then where is the million you boasted of?"

"Ah!"

There was a moment's pause, and once again the manager's chin sank to his chest. Randall, whose hand was trembling, slipped it into his pocket and withdrew the revolver, which he concealed behind his back, leaving his left fist resting on the table.

"I did not boast; I stated," said Murdoch, raising his head. "It is none of your business

where the million is, but I am so anxious to arrange terms with you and show you the hopelessness of your own position, that I will tell you. You spoke of the million drawing forty thousand pounds interest annually, but it draws no interest. I dare not set that money at work until you are out of my path, one way or another. All the Stock Exchange transactions were liquidated in gold, and the money is now in the shape of French louis, American eagles, English sovereigns, and German twenty-mark pieces. It rests in safe-deposit vaults in Paris, New York, London and Berlin. If I were compelled to fly to any of these countries I should find myself in possession of a quarter of a million, without the necessity of drawing a cheque or of being identified. But there will be no need for flight. There are only two options open to you: on the one hand, there is a sure and comfortable annuity for life; on the other, penal servitude. No sane man can hesitate for a moment over the choice."

"You talk of sanity. Are you so demented that you dare submit that cock-and-bull story to the scrutiny of a court of justice?"

"Certainly not. I shouldn't think of such a thing."

"Then what's the point of all this talk? Do you hope to frighten me with fiction?"

"Oh, no. I may inform you that the chief of police and two of his men are in the room on the other side of the hall. A certain signal will bring them here on the instant—one of two signals, in fact. First a revolver shot; so, as I have no weapon, it rests entirely with you whether or not you call them. Second, if I should turn that knob"—

pointing to the electric light extinguisher beside the private-room door—"the police would come in. For my own safety I shall make no attempt to reach the knob, so you had better sit down quietly and come to terms with me."

"You have not explained why you related that piece of fiction about the dead actor."

"I told you nothing but the truth. I said I would not put forward that story; for if the police come in I shall merely say you attempted blackmail, reciting to them exactly what you charged me with. The cock-and-bull story, as you call it, will not come out through any motion of mine. It will be discovered when the police, finding you started a bank account in London, make investigations. No one will be more surprised than I when that cock-and-bull story is laid before the public by the criminal authorities."

"You hypocritical villain!" shouted Randall, trembling with anger. "You say I have two choices, but there is a third you hadn't thought of. I shall first rid the world of such a ruffian. 'Tis self-defence. You've threatened me with prison," and I'll take my chance that the truth comes out."

Randall whisked round his revolver, certain that the manager would make a dash for the electric knob. Murdoch, however, sat apparently unconcerned, though watching alertly through his half-closed eyes every movement of his enemy. The moment Randall's right arm began its sweep pitch darkness fell, all the more blinding because of the previous brightness. Six shots rang out in quick succession, but the living target was immune beneath the table, making his way toward the outer door. Randall rushed toward the spot where

his foe had been seated, and fell over a chair. The door burst open, and two bull's-eye lanterns showed the assailant sprawling and swearing. He had thrown away the empty revolver and was reaching for the other when the police pounced, taking him at a complete disadvantage. Just as the handcuffs clicked upon his wrists the chandelier was suddenly turned full on, and the chief of police saw the bank manager standing beside the outer door, with his hand on the electric knob.

"Are you hurt, sir?" asked the chief anxiously.

"Not even a scratch, thank you," Murdoch answered him, smiling, "although I am much relieved by your promptness. I don't think he shot to kill, but merely to frighten. Poor Randall seems to be a nervous wreck. Overwork, probably. I have been anxious about him for some time. I told you this morning that he suffered from strange delusions, making the most shocking charges against my honesty."

"Any one who knows you, Mr. Murdoch, will pay little attention to slanders on your character," said the chief. "Still, it bears an ugly look when a young man seeks an interview with you, and comes armed. It is evident he intended mischief from the first. That signifies premeditation, and not impulse."

"Ah, permit me to explain. The two revolvers are mine, not his. One belongs to this drawer, the other to the cashier's desk. You may think me reckless, but I gave them to him. He appeared beside himself with fear that I should attack him, so I showed him there were no weapons in the bank except those two pistols, and in order to soothe him I placed them in his charge."

"Forgetting they were loaded?"

"No. I was never in any danger, but I resolved to learn how far he would go. A man in his condition cannot shoot straight. His hands were trembling all the time we talked. But I feel certain that a month at the seaside will set him right again. It is his misfortune, poor chap, that, even though he recovers, I can never risk placing him in a responsible position again. Now, Chief, here are pens, ink and paper. Would you sit down and take his deposition? He made some very serious allegations against me."

The chief drew up a chair to the table and prepared to write, looking across at his prisoner. William Randall's face was ghastly pale. The cold grip of the handcuffs on his wrists seemed to have frozen his blood.

"Formulate your charge, Randall. The chief will take down what you say." The manager spoke encouragingly, as one does to an invalid.

The cashier made no reply.

"You remember I advised you to go to the chief of police in the first place." (A pause, in which there was silence.) "Don't you?"

"Yes, I remember," answered Randall at last.

"Very well; repeat what you said," ordered the manager.

"I have no charge to make against you, Mr. Murdoch."

"Oh, yes, you have. I stole the bonds."

"No."

"And speculated with them in London."

"No."

"You mentioned a date. That is what I

am anxious to get fixed in writing, and before witnesses."

"If there is no charge there can be no date."

"Ah, I am sorry, because I can easily prove that during the time the speculation was alleged to be going on I never visited London, nor for three months after. I was too busy here in the bank. You may recollect the panic of two years ago, Chief?"

"Yes," replied the chief, "and we were all very proud that the bank pulled through."

"We pulled through, but my nose was kept to the grindstone for several months, never once giving me a chance to leave Chelsingham. Well, Chief, what are we to do with our prisoner?"

"Will you appear against him, Mr. Murdoch?"

"If I do it will be merely to state what I have said to you: that the man is temporarily irresponsible."

"You make no charge against him?"

"Oh, no."

"Then I don't see how, without a charge, we can hold him."

"I will be responsible for his future conduct if you let him go. The bank has always been rather open-handed with employees who break down in its service, so I shall make a proposal to the directors at the next meeting which will very likely be adopted."

"Take off the handcuffs," said the chief to his men, and as they obeyed this command the chief said, aside, to the bank manager:

"If all men were as honest and as generous as you, Mr. Murdoch, this would be a better world than it is."

The manager laughed.

“May I encourage that opinion by begging you to accept these two ten-pound notes with which to recompense the officers for their long vigil and alert assistance? They will, of course, say nothing about to-night’s work to any one. So far as integrity goes, no man is so honest that he may look for Elijah’s chariot of fire.”

Dorothy of the Mill

A PAINTING of Elmsdell Mill might truthfully have been labelled "Peace." It occupied a romantic situation near the head of the valley. Above it lay the large mill-pond, or small lake, just as you choose to call it, placid in the sunlight, its margin, however, shaded by drooping trees, whose branches bent to drink, as it seemed, of the clear, still water. The pond was needed as a reservoir of power, for the mill was far up that valley, and the stream at this height was small. Lower down, where the rivulet became a river, there were mills in plenty that had no pond, and needed nothing more than a narrow channel cut to feed their small wheels. But Elmsdell Mill, to make the most of what water it had, possessed a wheel of great diameter, that the leverage of its spokes might make the most of the liquid force at its command. The stone mill itself was overgrown with ivy, and overshadowed by tall elms, and coming from the north, one would not suspect its existence, were it not for that mirror of a pond, which seemed framed with a green girdle. But the southern end of the mill was bare white stone in its lower storey, overtopped by timber and plaster in the gable, and was a landmark for miles to any traveller coming up the winding road by the stream, he seeing the mill with its fringe of trees topping the upper valley.

It was a scene emblematic of the sweetest peace, yet was far from being typical of the state of affairs in England, for that grim fighter, Cromwell himself, was camped but half an hour's ride away down this vale of seeming content, resting from his latest battle, where he had put to flight those who scorned him, scattering them like chaff before the wind, and Dorothy, as with her apron she rubbed the white dust from the semi-obsured end window of the mill, saw a mounted man and a dozen foot soldiers hurrying up the road towards the mill. Dorothy was discontented with Cromwell, and thought him a most unreasonable man, yet had she cause for congratulation if she had only paused to think. Only the day before had a great fear been lifted from herself and her mother. News of a fierce battle had come to them, and after that, silence and racking anxiety, for her father and her two stalwart brothers were all three among Cromwell's forces. News of the conflict had been brought to that secluded vale by men who brought cartloads of wheat which were weighed into the mill, each man accepting a statement on paper of the weight of his load, written by the miller's wife. This incursion of grain was entirely unexpected by the two women in the cottage on the opposite side of the road to the mill, and all the bringers could say was that they had been ordered by officers of the Parliamentary army to deliver what wheat they had to Elmsdell Mill. One wise yeoman said he thought it was because the mill stood so secluded, thus less likely to fall into the hands of the Royalists, noted throughout the land as being scandalously ignorant of their own country, while every inch of the shire was known to the Cromwellian soldiers, and in this

surmise the old yeoman was doubtless right. These men said a terrible battle had been fought, but what the outcome was not one of them knew. Their duty was to bring wheat to the mill, and they were inclined to suppose that the less they interfered in the affairs of the mighty, the better for them, for no man yet knew how the cat was to jump, though all admitted Cromwell seemed to be having the best of it.

The first tidings that all was well with their own folk came by mounted messenger up the valley, hurrying his horse so that the women seeing him come, had their worst moment ere he spoke, their tremor of fear augmented rather than assuaged by seeing on nearer approach that the speeding messenger was a neighbour's son, Standfast Standish by name ; and yet in spite of this suspense Dorothy's fair cheeks coloured, and her eyes were downcast as young Standish sprang from his horse.

"What has befallen? What has befallen?" cried the miller's wife.

"The Lord has given us a great victory," said Standish solemnly, "and has crushed the ungodly."

"Yes, yes," cried the woman, "but what about my man and my two sons?"

"They are well," said Standish, "untouched, though they were in the thick of it."

"Thank God, thank God," repeated the wife two or three times, and then Dorothy looked up, saying with something almost of reproach in her tones:

"Why then did you ride so fast? You frightened us."

"I ride, Doll, under orders that are not to be slighted. When Cromwell himself gives the word, horseflesh or manflesh must not be spared. His

orders are to grind, grind, grind, and turn the corn into meal: the army must be fed."

"How are we to grind?" demanded the girl, "when he has taken our millers from us?"

"There lies the water: there stands the mill. Is there no corn?" asked the young man.

"Corn enough; the mill is full of it," replied the girl.

"Then Cromwell says 'Grind.'"

"Does he expect me to do it?" she asked.

"He cares not who does it, so 'tis done. That is Cromwell's way," replied the lad.

"You will eat here before going farther?" interrupted Mistress Mitford.

"I go no farther," said the lad.

"Surely you go on to your own home, if but to let them see you are safe and sound?" protested the miller's wife.

"I have no such leave," replied Standish, "and must return at once; indeed, I scarce dare spare time to eat, but if you have a mug of ale——"

"Tut, tut," cried the good woman, "come in. There is ale in plenty, and a meat pie on the table such as you do not get in the army. Dorothy will hold your horse till you come out again."

"Indeed," said the young man archly, "I shall put her to no such task, but shall tie the horse's bridle to this ring in the wall, so that Dorothy may accompany us within," and he cast a meaning glance from under his steel cap at the girl, who tossed her head indifferently.

"You need not so trouble yourself, Mr. Standish," she said; "I make nothing of holding a horse, even for so long a time as you take to a meal."

The young man made no reply to this flippant

remark, but securely tied the leather strap in the iron ring, then turning to her, the mother having disappeared within the cottage, he said earnestly :

“ Doll, my time is short, but I hope it will be long enough for the small word ‘ yes.’ ”

“ Indeed,” said she, in no way abashed, “ ’tis the longest word in the language for what it entails. Become a general, Standfast, and I’ll say yes right speedily. You know how ambitious I am, yet imprisoned here in this dull valley, with nothing happening.”

“ You do not value your good fortune,” said the young man solemnly. “ Things happen elsewhere that are ill to look upon. Thank God for the quiet of the valley.”

“ I do,” said the girl instantly, falling into his own mood of seriousness, “ I do whenever I think of what is beyond.”

“ Then, Doll dear, will you not make the day brighter for one who has to go beyond, by saying the word I ask of you ? ” and with a clumsy attempt at lightness, he added, “ Something will happen at once in this quiet valley if you do,” whereupon he made an attempt to encircle her waist with his arm, but she whisked away from him.

“ The word ‘ no,’ ” she said, “ is even shorter than the one you mentioned. If you wish for brevity why not accept that ? ”

Before he could reply Mistress Mitford appeared at the door.

“ I thought you were hurried,” she said. “ Your meat and malt are waiting for you.”

“ You will come in with me ? ” he whispered, pleading to the girl, who with flushed cheeks kept

the distance more than arm's length between them.

"Yes, I shall come," she pouted, "I think I am safer by my mother's side than by yours," and so the two entered the cottage, the valiant Standish attacking the pie with no less valour than he had displayed in battle a few days before.

Mistress Mitford sat opposite him, and Dorothy some distance apart, the elder woman plying him with questions regarding the fight, which Standish answered with some reluctance, evidently wishing to forget it all. He had been a farmer before he was a fighter, and was not yet hardened to slaughter.

"'Tis none so bad," he said, "when the fight is on, and one's blood is up, but afterwards, when the night falls and the groaning is heard while we search the battlefield, 'tis a doleful business, and, after all, whoever is right, and whoever in the wrong of it, 'tis sad to see Englishmen fight Englishmen. Frenchmen, now, were a different matter."

"We are all God's creatures," said the woman, shaking her head in despondency.

"Not Frenchmen," protested young Standfast, and neither of the two women was sure enough about it to contradict him.

After the meal the young man rode down the valley again, satisfied in body, if not in spirit.

And now the two women were confronted with the problem of working the mill. "Grind," commanded Cromwell, and he was not one to be disobeyed. It is likely that if the miller had not been blessed with two strong sons who acted as his assistants, wife and daughter might have understood better the machinery of the mill, but as it was they were at a loss how to proceed. If they turned

on the water, they might wreck the machinery, and thus, although obeying in the letter, there would be disobedience in the spirit, with the problem of feeding the army thereby rendered more acute.

After much labour they filled with grain the huge bin shaped like an inverted pyramid, through which the wheat flowed to the stones, and then they determined to send a messenger to camp and request the presence of either the father or one of the two sons. This was done the morning after the visit of Standish, and now Dorothy stood by the flour-obscured window, rubbing its panes with her apron, watching the approaching cavalcade and wondering if this were the expedition sent to her rescue. In that case Cromwell was slightly overdoing it: she had asked for one man, not for a dozen.

As the procession came near, she recognized her father among the foot soldiers. A miller never distinguishes himself on horseback, so old Mitford trailed a pike instead of being one of Cromwell's mounted Ironsides.

A cavalryman took his stand in the middle of the road, while the foot soldiers rapidly surrounded the mill. The upper half of the door was open. Mitford, followed by two or three men, unfastened the lower leaf and entered, his daughter coming forward to meet them.

"Why is the mill not working, Dorothy?" he asked anxiously. "Didn't you get the General's command?"

"Mother and I were afraid to let on the water, fearing we might destroy the mill, instead of making meal."

"Tut, tut," cried the old man impatiently, "the mill would come to no harm. I'll show you what to

do when we have finished our business. Have you seen any loiterers about ? ”

“ No.”

“ None in cavalier dress ? ”

“ Not one.”

“ Lord Dorincourt was taken prisoner, and has escaped. He is thought to have come up the valley, and may be concealed in the mill. Come, my lads, I know every nook and cranny where even a rat might hide. If his lordship is here, we’ll soon have him out.”

The old building was searched from raftered attics to moss-covered cellars dripping with water but no trace of the Royalist was found within its walls.

“ He is not here, I’ll vouch for that,” reported the begrimed miller to the man on horseback.

Every one was then set at beating the bushes and thicket surrounding the pond, but this, too, was labour lost. Meanwhile the miller turned on the water: the great wheel slowly revolved and the flour came pouring out.

“ There’s nought to do but keep the hopper full, and work till the pond runs dry, which it will not do for some weeks yet,” said the father.

Then the man on horseback gathered his followers, and departed fruitlessly down the hill again. Dorothy stood by the transparent pane and watched them until they were finally shut from her sight. With a sigh she turned from the window, and then was startled by hearing a half-smothered voice cry:

“ In the Fiend’s name, madam, are they gone ? If so, I beg of you stop the mill.”

She knew not from whence the voice came, but

instinctively she turned to the lever, shut off the water, and the roar of machinery ceased.

"Who are you, and where are you?" she demanded.

For answer there were various sounds as of a man trying to clear his mouth so that he might speak. Then two hands appeared over the edge of the bin, whose load of wheat was still not perceptibly diminished, and a tousled head of blonde, curling hair rose up between the hands until a pair of sparkling eyes regarded her.

"A thousand thanks, my lady, for stopping the grinding stones. A moment more I had been gone between them, and the flower of my youth pulverized into flour for the Parliamentarians; curse them."

"You were in no danger," said the girl severely. "How came you there?"

"Are you alone, my lady?"

"Yes," replied the girl, backing towards the door.

"Let us thank God for that. Will you place me under further obligation by closing the door? Some one might pass, and really my apparel is in such a disarray that I have no anxiety to receive company."

"You are Lord Dorincourt," she said accusingly, without moving to realize his request.

"Oh, no, no, my fair girl," replied the unseen mouth, while the visible eyes laughed. "I am in reality Oliver Cromwell, but am so ashamed of the title that only the duress in which I find myself compels me to admit it."

"You are Lord Dorincourt," she repeated, with conviction.

"I was once, my lady, but not now, not now. I assure you I am a changed man, and I defy my

dearest friend to recognize me. My doublet is as full of corn as ever were the tightest boots of the most bunion-footed Puritan that ever stepped."

"How dare you speak with levity, considering your danger?"

"Madam, you have just informed me that I am safe from the millstones."

"Yes, but not from the upper and nether millstone of the law."

"Dorothy, I am in no trouble from that source. To reach the hands of the rebels I must first be betrayed, and there is too much kindness in your eyes to send even so worthless a fellow-creature as I to his death. In those charming and beautiful eyes I read, alas! disapproval of myself, but I see there no capital sentence, Mademoiselle Dorothy."

He had now raised himself up along the slanting boards until head and shoulders were above the rim of the bin. His doublet was fine, though sadly torn, but a tatter of throat gear remained to him, and his neck was scratched as if with brambles. His left arm he used with evident difficulty, and she saw the doublet cut away at the shoulder, and stained red as if from a wound but recently received. Her eyes moistened at this knowledge of his pitiable condition, so jauntily carried off, as if it were, upon the whole, a huge joke.

"How do you know my name is Dorothy?" she asked with less of accusation in her voice than had hitherto been the case.

"I heard your father call you so. 'Tis a lovely name, and lovingly I dwell on it;" then seeing in her eyes a return of that disapproval which he had formerly noted, he added quickly: "I have a sister Dorothy, and an anxious girl she is this day, I

warrant you, though her brother may have a jest on his parched lips, while mouth and throat are like the great desert with chaff and dust of the corn. Thus I venture to call you the Lady Dorothy, and again implore you to close that gaping door."

"No one passes this way," she said.

"Your pardon, Lady Dorothy, but those who have just gone may return. Surely you are not afraid of a wounded man?"

"We Puritans," she said proudly, "have no reason to fear: we can defend ourselves."

"Egad, madam, and you speak truth," cried his lordship, laughing, "I can testify to that. I wish I had your courage. I fear the door opening upon the highway."

Without another word she went to the door and closed it. He made an attempt to throw a leg over the rim of his prison, but the exertion was too much for him, and he fell back groaning, his face going white like the flour that powdered the walls.

"Be not in such haste," she said, and taking a small step-ladder she set it up against the bin, mounted lightly, and held out her hand to him. He smiled wanly up at her, and with her help was soon down upon the floor of the mill.

"Would you care for a mug of ale?" she asked him.

"Ale? Is there such a blessing in this ill-fated land? Has not that damned brewer—I humbly beg your pardon, madam, I'm a wicked man and forgot myself—but that brewer Cromwell has driven ale and every other good thing out of the country he encumbers, thus ruining his own trade, curse him. Ale, did you say? It seems incredible! But angels may work miracles, therefore I shall

believe that ale exists. And, Dorothy, a crust of bread for a starving dog ! ”

The girl, her compassion touched, fled to the house. The coast was clear, for her mother had walked down the valley with her father. When she returned he seized the tankard with an almost wolfish glitter in his eyes, and brought it near to his cracked lips. Then he thrust it from him and held it aloft, while his left hand removed the tattered hat, his wounded arm with difficulty obeying his will.

“ The King ! God bless him ! ” he cried.

“ My lord, you dishonour hospitality,” said Dorothy sternly. “ I brought you the drink for no such toast.”

He consumed half of what was in the tankard before he set it down and replied, this time with more soberness than he had hitherto evinced :

“ The texts are not all on your side, my lady Dorothy. ‘ Fear God and honour the King ’ says the good Book. The hospitality of no household in England is dishonoured when I obey the Bible, and pray God to bless the English King. Unfortunate man ! Would that my prayer were as potent for him as this good ale is for me.”

The young man was seated on the lowest step of the ladder which still leaned against the bin of the hopper. His first thought had been to his thirst, and so he had taken a long drink from the generous flagon. Now, as he set it down on the stone floor, he remembered his supplication for a crust of bread when he saw on the broad trencher a heaping-up of meat pasty. He reached the trencher to his knees, and placed it there, then looked up at Dorothy

with a smile, half whimsical, and wholly winning. She stood between him and the closed door, the light from the southern window enveloping her in luminous relief against the dark background of the wall. Her fair face was shadowed with perplexity, as she looked down on the young man smiling up at her, who, starving as he was, left for the moment his appetizing dish untouched. He guessed her thoughts, and read his fate in those glorious, sombre eyes. She was a true daughter of that vigorous race which had crumpled up the aristocracy of England as if it had been flimsy tinsel, which the young man began to suspect it really was. He saw that the girl pitied him as a hunted wanderer, but would nevertheless deliver him to his enemies as a traitor to his country. He knew that threats or persuasion would alike be useless, while wounded and exhausted he could not overcome her by physical force and thus accomplish his escape. Not even quiescence on her part would ensure his safety. He must cross the marshy moor above the mill from which this stream took its source, and that journey were impossible unless he had a guide who knew the way. On the other side of the desolate moor, he was a free man once more. So he looked up at her smiling, and she looked down on him with deep melancholy. There was something in his glance and smile that filled her with vague uneasiness—she, the country maiden; he, the man of the world. Her eyes, clear and unpolluted as the crystal stream that turned the wheel; his, shadowed by the reflection of the city in fouler waters far below. She shivered a little, not relishing his scrutiny, and said with impatience:

“ Sir, why do you not eat ? ”

"Dorothy, I dare not, until the problem in your mind is solved."

"There is no problem," she said shortly.

"Ah yes, my lady, there is. Duty says harshly, 'Give him up to his foes'; humanity whispers, 'Mercy blesses her that gives and him that takes.'"

"I shall do my duty," she said, drawing a long, quivering breath.

"Then, congratulations, madam. The conflict is ended, and I shall not so wrong your gentle soul as to pretend that the victory has been welcome to you. Take away the trencher."

The young man leaned back wearily against the rounds of the ladder. His eyes closed, and his face went to a chalky whiteness. The girl with a gasp of sympathy took a step nearer to him.

"Surely you will eat?"

"Take it away: its very aroma is maddening to me. I have had nothing to eat for three days, save a mouthful of throat-parching corn while buried in this bin."

"Then why do you refuse now when plenty is offered you? We do not starve our prisoners."

The young man sat up again, and was so inconsistent as to offer himself momentary refreshment from the lips of the flagon. The brief draught seemed to revive him.

"My Lady Dorothy, I am no prisoner of yours, nor are you authorized to hold me. I surrendered to your compassion, not to your vengeance. It is because of you I dare not eat. Were I in the tent of the most barbarous Arab that rides the desert, and did I break but a crust of bread with him, my life were sacred in his hands; yes, to be defended from peril even at risk of his own. Shall a Christian

maiden in a civilized land be lower in the human scale than a heathen savage? Christ forbid! whose words, 'Neither do I condemn thee,' should ring in every woman's ears."

"Eat, I beg of you," said Dorothy, with a sob.

"As a prisoner?" he asked, looking searchingly at her.

"No, no, as a hungry man. Finish your flagon, and I will refill it."

By the time she had returned with the brimming flagon, the pastry had well nigh disappeared. All his old jauntiness had returned to the tattered noble.

"I swear to you, Dorothy, war is a stern school-master. I understand now what I never could fathom before, why Esau sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. Yesterday I lay prone in a thicket of my own plantation. It was a foolish place to hide, for they said, 'He will make up the valley to his own estate,' and as I lay there with the Roundheads beating the bushes within twenty paces of me, the thought came to me: 'This land in which my face is buried is my birthright and gladly would I sell it for a mess of pottage.'"

When the repast was finished Dorothy took trencher and tankard to the house, and on her return the young man bolted the upper half of the mill door, which at the same time automatically sealed the lower half.

"I distrust this door," he said, seeing the girl seemed slightly alarmed at his action. "When it is open any chance passer-by may enter, and then it is too late to hide. Now he must knock."

"There are no chance passers-by in this lonely district," said the girl.

“Then there are those who come by design, and they are still more dangerous.”

The young man had scarcely finished his sentence when the reality of his apprehension was made audible to them. There was a clatter of iron-shod hoofs on the hard road.

“A troop of horse!” he whispered, and seeing all colour leave her face he added, as if she were the one in danger, “They are like to pass on, I think.”

The first part of his sentence was as correct as the last part was inaccurate. A strenuous voice rang out; a voice the girl had never heard before, but which thrilled her with instant fear.

“Halt! Dismount, and surround the mill.”

“By God, Cromwell himself!” cried the young man, his right hand instinctively reaching his swordless hip. “Cromwell here, and I weaponless,” he added bitterly, as his empty right hand swung round to his side again. “Would I had a thousand lives to exchange for his pestilent existence! But to be trapped like a rat!”

“Come this way,” said Dorothy, as she raised a trap-door, “hurry, hurry!”

The young man followed her down into the dark and the damp, stumbling awkwardly. She, however, knew her road, and threw open a door in the outer wall that allowed some light to filter into the gloom. Outside was the dim skeleton of the great wheel.

“Step in here,” she said breathlessly, “if the water is turned on you will have to walk for your life.”

She bolted the door upon him, and was on the upper floor an instant after, closing down the trap-door.

“Open!” cried a voice from the outside, while a sabre hilt smote three blows against the timber.

Dorothy instantly pulled back the bolt, and threw open the two leaves of the door. It needed no introducer to identify for her the scowling man in steel breast-plate who stood before her.

“Who are you?” was his demand.

“Dorothy Mitford, sir, daughter of the miller.”

“Why is the mill silent when I ordered it to grind?”

“It has been stopped but a short ten minutes since, sir. It was grinding all morning.”

“Why was it stopped ten minutes since?”

“It is the dinner hour, sir.”

“As I came up I saw you fly back and forth between the cottage and the mill. What were you doing?”

Fear had given place to anger at this rude questioning, so abrupt and discourteous, and this before all these men standing behind him, among whom, with heightened colour, she recognized Standfast Standish.

“Sir,” she said, “I must be fed as well as your army.”

A grim smile flickered for an instant round those masterful lips, then disappeared as quickly as it came. He made no comment upon her pertness, but turned to one of his men and said:

“Go into the cottage, and see if two have dined there. Have you seen any strangers about?” asked Cromwell as before.

“In the morning there was a dozen, searching the mill. The only one among them that I knew was my father.”

“You saw no one else?”

"I have not been out of the mill, sir, except to prepare food. I have been grinding all morning, and no one has entered these doors, except myself."

"What is that ladder doing standing against the hopper?"

"I have been filling the hopper with corn."

At this juncture the man returned from the cottage.

"There is one empty trencher, sir, from which one person has fed."

Cromwell strode into the mill, and up the steps of the ladder, thrusting his sword half a dozen times down through the grain. Lucky for Lord Dorincourt that he was elsewhere. Satisfying himself that nothing but wheat was within the bin, the General descended, casting a suspicious glance at the girl, and said:

"We have traced him here. I am certain he is within these walls."

"I am certain he is not, sir," replied Dorothy, with all the assurance of exact truth. "My father knows every cranny of this mill, and he searched thoroughly."

"Humph," growled Cromwell, "begin the grinding again, and if he is among the machinery, let him take peril of it. Your reason for the stopping of the mill seems scant enough."

The girl walked promptly and proudly to the lever, drew it towards her, and instantly the low rumble of machinery began. She paid no further attention to her visitors, but went calmly to the scupper out of which poured the warm meal, and fingered its flow critically.

Cromwell's eyes never left her, and again the

slight smile chased the darkness from his countenance as he saw the testing of the meal, an action well known to him, for he was a miller himself, but was now about to be discomfited, for he lived in a flat country where the water-wheels are small, and it never occurred to him that a water-wheel might act as prison for a man.

The General set his men at the second search of the mill and this time the scrutiny was thorough enough to satisfy any one. He himself went outside, and mounted his horse, awaiting stolidly the result of the investigation. Relieved from the eye of the master, Standfast Standish chose the lower portion of the mill as his ground for search, that perhaps he might exchange a word with Dorothy. She received his greetings coldly enough, and seemed still offended at the treatment the General had accorded her. Standfast himself, although he feared and admired his chief, was indignant that her word should not have been instantly taken, and he said this emphatically to Dorothy, which won him a kindlier look than he had yet obtained from her; then, seeking further ground of advantage, he said with enthusiasm :

“ I know a place none of them have searched—the water-wheel. I’ll go down the trap-door and look to that myself.”

The indifference fell away from the girl like a cloak flung off.

“ You will not,” she said.

“ Why not? He might be there.”

“ He could not be there unless I led him to the wheel. There would be only one chance in a thousand for him to happen on the trap-door.”

“ But,” objected the stubborn youth, “ a trap-

door is exactly what an escaped prisoner would look for."

"Even if he found it," she urged, "he would descend into darkness, and be little likely to find the door to the wheel."

"Still, it is possible," he persisted, "and there is no harm in looking."

"There is the harm that I forbid you."

"Why?"

"Are you General Cromwell that you should question me thus?" she asked with rising anger, her eyes ablaze.

The young fellow gazed at her in astonishment, which gradually changed to an expression somewhat approaching distrust.

"General Cromwell," he said slowly, "seems to be much more far-seeing than I am. I am determined to search the wheel."

"Very well," she answered decisively, "do so, and take the penalty."

"What is the penalty?"

"That you never speak to me again as long as you live. I will not have my word doubted by two men in the same day, though one is the highest and the other the lowest in the army."

With that she turned from him, and once more placed her trembling hand in the flow of meal. Out of the corner of her eye, however, she saw that her lover made no move to put his resolve into execution.

The men came down from the upper part of the mill, and reported the fruitlessness of their quest. A bugle call rang out, and those who surrounded the mill came hurrying to the road.

"Tell the girl to come here," said Cromwell. When she stood before him he went on:

"Are you alone in this mill?"

"No, sir, my mother is with me, although absent at this moment."

"Have you a brother?"

"Two of them, sir."

"Where are they?"

"In General Cromwell's army."

The General looked around him.

"Is any man here a miller?" he asked.

There was no response, until young Standish stepped forth.

"I am a miller," he said, a deep frown on his brow. The girl opened her mouth to contradict him, but closed it without speaking.

"You will remain here," said Cromwell; "the mill must run night and day until every sack of corn within it is ground. The women will look after it in the daytime, and you at night."

Cromwell wheeled his horse towards the south, his men falling in, two and two, behind him. The girl without a word re-entered the mill, Standish following. She went to the window, looking again through the pane that again needed dusting, watching the cavalcade now trotting smartly down the valley.

"Well, Dorothy," said the young man, "how much longer are you going to keep Lord Dorincourt in the wheel?"

"Until Cromwell and his men are entirely out of sight," she replied firmly, without turning round.

"Who led him to the wheel?"

"I did, the moment I heard the clatter of the horse. You said yesterday it was a pity Englishmen should kill Englishmen, therefore I attempted to save one man."

"Oh, his life has never been in danger; we do not kill our prisoners."

"Very well, stop the mill, and take him out. He is unarmed, and wounded, so his capture will be safe enough. Take him with you to the camp."

"Dorothy, you heard me say I was a miller."

"Yes, and I knew it was not true."

"I am willing to learn from you, Dorothy, but that is not the point. I am here by the General's orders as miller, not as soldier."

"What difference does that make?"

"The difference that if you are interested in Lord Dorincourt's life, or rather, his liberty, I do not violate my oath as a soldier by leading him to safety across the moor."

The girl whirled round.

"Will you do that?" she cried.

"Yes, if you bid me."

"He is a poor, forlorn creature," she said, "even if he is a lord. Stop the mill, Standish, and I will release him."

She raised the trap-door, and descended, while he pushed in the lever and throttled the mill. It was indeed a forlorn object that appeared out of the darkness of the trap-door, a man drenched and dripping, but laughing nevertheless, though somewhat ruefully.

"I declare, Dorothy," he cried, as he came blinking into the daylight, "I shall never forget you, and I swear that you will never forget so comical a wretch as I. All I need now is an oven. First I was powdered with flour, then plastered with water, and thus the dough about me calls but for the baking, and I am a walking loaf."

"This young man," said Dorothy, somewhat

breathlessly, "will lead you across the moor in safety."

"Egad," cried Lord Dorincourt, glancing without enthusiasm at Standish, "his uniform whispers that he is more likely to take me into Cromwell's camp."

Standish's fist had clenched angrily as he noted the familiarity with which the young lord spoke to Dorothy, and his lips closed into a firm line.

"I will answer for him, my lord," she said, "because he who risks his liberty in your service is my promised husband."

The dripping lord made his most profound bow.

"Young man, I congratulate you. You adore the Queen, even though you fight against the King."

But Standish heard him not : his face was aglow as he gazed at the blushing Dorothy.

The Labour Leader

I

PETER GRANT returned slowly to his dismal lodgings in Shadwell. It was nearing five o'clock on a sultry afternoon, and the man felt that he would be the better for a cup of tea, although he was also vaguely conscious that he regarded even that slight stimulant with an inward loathing.

Grant was thirty-two years old, tall, gaunt, and thin, with the look of an unfrocked mediæval monk. Those who knew him predicted that a long life was not to be his. Hardships and early privations had sown seeds of destruction in his slender frame, but, after all, he came of a family of unthinking, unreasonably stalwart labourers, and life clung to him, rather than he to life. He had never tasted a drop of liquor, and knew nothing of that solace which a clay of tobacco might bring. There was something of the monk about Peter, in reality as well as in appearance. He was his own hardest taskmaster, and disciplined himself with the grim rigour of a Jesuit. Very early in life the hard labour to which his caste condemned him with the inevitableness of a judge's sentence, and the semi-starvation that was the reward of his usefulness, turned

his thoughts, naturally sombre, towards the drastic conditions under which his fellows pursued their halting march from the cradle to the grave ; from oblivion to oblivion, through that harsh semi-darkness called Life.

As a lad he had been a constant, silent frequenter of meetings where the problems of toil were discussed with bitter invective by unlettered men, and later on he slowly developed a faculty which could not be termed eloquence, but which enabled him to obtain and retain the interest of his associates. What he said was always to the point, and his terse sentences were often so barbed with meaning that they stuck, rankling and disturbing, in the consciousness of his hearers.

As time went on, this serious, death-marked man acquired an influence over his audience that, except to a keen student of oratory, was difficult to explain, because those who attempted to solve the enigma failed to take into account his ascetic life ; a life strikingly in contrast with that of his comrades, whose chief place of resort and pleasure was the public bar. He came to be regarded with something like awe ; a modern Peter the Hermit, the preacher of a new crusade, and so his reputation grew and extended until it came about that wherever an important gathering of labouring men was convened, Grant was invited to address it.

At last he was elected to Parliament, defeating alike the Tory and the Liberal, coming out at the head of the poll in an important three-cornered contest, the result of which proved a surprise to the two leading parties of Great Britain. And now gradually the eyes of the country turned towards him, the majority with fear, seeing the developing

of a new Robespierre ; others with hope, as if watching the advent of a William Tell.

And now we meet him, at the zenith of his power, returning to his squalid lodgings, after addressing the most important and largest labour meeting that had ever assembled in Hyde Park. Every man of intelligence who heard him that day became aware that a novel power had arisen in Britain, which very shortly, for good or ill, would have to be reckoned with, to issue from the struggle crushed or victorious, and if victorious, what was to be the future of Britain, for his demands far exceeded anything that even the most advanced wing of the older parties were prepared to propose. Yet in his great speech Peter Grant had used none of the arts of the demagogue ; nevertheless, he had swayed that vast audience as if it were emotional as a concourse of religious devotees. He played upon it as an expert musician calls forth from a grand organ such tones, harmonies, or discords as he wishes to produce. On the morrow England would wish to know what use this rising politician proposed to make of the power he had given such proof of possessing, but meanwhile, on the evening before this inquiry, the pallid man, with the faith that moved the multitude, and hoped to remove mountains of injustice, tottered weakly into his poverty-blighted room at Shadwell.

As he pushed open the door, he saw seated there a man in the conventional black garments which middle-class people wear in the afternoon. He held in his hand a glossy silk hat, and rose respectfully as the owner of the apartment entered it. Grant was not surprised to find a stranger in possession. All sorts and conditions of men called upon him,

at all sorts of hours ; some seeking his advice, others with flattering offers, trying to enlist his co-operation. The working man in homely garb visited him early, before toil began ; or late, after it ended. The others might be looked for at any hour of the day. Whatever offers the richer portion of the community made, Grant invariably rejected. Prospective wealth held no temptation for him, while honours and titles he despised. It had already been shown that he was a man not to be bribed. His life and his talents were devoted to the welfare of the workers. He therefore greeted his visitor with a species of abrupt salutation that had little of courtesy or kindness in it. Grant had always been unable to conceal his contempt for the *bourgeois*.

He flung himself down upon a bench, and jerked out the word " Well ? " with an accent of interrogation. The stranger more slowly reseated himself, and passed his right hand over the glossy surface of his hat, as if at a loss for the proper words to begin whatever conversation he had determined to hold with the labour leader.

" Sir," he ventured at last, " you are just returned from the greatest triumph of your life. You have proved yourself able to influence men in the mass to an extent probably without precedent. As we sit here alone, may I ask you without offence a question which you may regard as impertinent ? "

" Ask your question," growled Grant.

" It is this. Are you unswervingly sincere in your desire to aid the working class ? "

" I am sincere," said Grant, with no trace of resentment in his tone at the implication conveyed by the question.

"In that case," continued the stranger, "I am commissioned to make you a proposal which will place in your hands the power to achieve your ambition, should you prove courageous enough to adopt it."

Grant shrugged his shoulders with an air of impatience.

"I have received many offers from you and your kind; offers professedly in aid of the workers, but actually for their exploitation. I therefore reject your proposal before I hear it."

"Is not your rejection somewhat premature? If it is inadvisable to buy a pig in a poke, is it not equally injudicious to refuse a glance at the animal offered for sale?"

"No, it is not. I am quite well acquainted with the merchandise in which you swine traffic," replied the man, with intentional rudeness. The other took no offence, but smiled sadly as he gazed at the orator with deep-set eyes that seemed to hypnotize.

"You are more nearly right than you suspect. All mankind knows the traffic in which I and my satellites deal. Our goods are never refused, and no dealer receives two visits from me. I decline to argue or to bargain with my customers, and if I appear to do so with you, it is because I have received orders from my superior, whose faithful servant I am. Let us not waste time in discussing my affairs, but, what is more to the purpose, confine our attention to the projects you have in hand. Your gathering to-day was a notable success?"

"That is admitted even by our opponents."

"You could have marched a mob of thousands

down Piccadilly, and sacked the shops of West London had you but given the word ? ”

“ Possibly.”

“ Instead, you asked the thousands to go quietly home, and they went ? ”

“ Yes, they did.”

“ But you wished the people of Britain to know the result might have been different ? ”

“ That is true. I was determined that the aristocracy and the middle-class should receive an object lesson. It is necessary for them to know that the patience of centuries is at an end ; that although there was no threat of violence in my address, yet violence stands ready at my beck. The Briton always respects the man who can knock him down, therefore it was to-day my privilege to show him Labour with coat off, sleeves rolled up, and fists clenched. We will get what we want, or we will take it.”

“ Quite so. Then the Briton is the only one who is to be taught by an object lesson. You, for instance, have learned nothing ? ”

“ I am always learning. I hope I keep an open mind.”

“ What fact of vital importance to your career entered your open mind to-day ? ”

“ My dear sir, although I have spoken to you with a reasonable amount of civility when you remember that you come without introduction or explanation of your status, I do not for a moment admit your right to cross-examine me as if you were a King’s Counsel, and I an unprotected witness in the box.”

“ That means, Mr. Grant, that you have learned no lesson. Apparently you have attained success,

The future is yours, and you see yourself leading to victory a compact phalanx of workers who, as you say, will take by force what they cannot obtain by argument. You imagine your position unique, but it is simply that of nearly every labour leader since the world began. They have each dreamed dreams, and have died at last of broken hearts, defeated, not by the plutocrats, but by their own so-called followers. Such will be your fate. The schism has already begun. While the people at large are admiring, condemning, discussing your speech, the ambitious, little big men of the Labour Party are criticizing, belittling, sneering, slighting. They are already murmuring that you arrogate too much to yourself; they are jealous of your popularity; they think you no cleverer than themselves."

"What you say is more or less true of all political parties."

"Certainly; but a Liberal or a Conservative will work with the people they hate, for the furtherance of a common cause. If a working man had the sense to do this, he would not be a working man for long. He would rise."

"Well, sir, what you say doubtless contains some elements of truth. I have devoted my life to this task, and must take the rough with the smooth. If at last I am defeated, it will not be because of any faltering on my part."

"Failure is failure, Mr. Grant, and your faltering or standing steadfast are trivialities that do not count. A practical man would rather falter and succeed than remain staunch and fail. In an important mission like yours, to which you are ready to devote your life, success is everything. Your defeat means the continued enslavement of the

masses, and in that great disaster your own personal proclivities fade into nothingness."

Peter Grant bent his head and sighed deeply. All the resentment which he formerly felt towards this interfering man had vanished. He felt he had encountered a nature quieter and stronger than his own.

"I agree with you," he said, "that in such an outcome my own conduct, be it good or bad, is but as dust in the balance, and at last you have reduced me to a condition of mind willing to listen to any proposal you may make, welcoming help if you proffer it, so long as that help ministers to the success of the great work to which my heart and soul are devoted."

"I thank you," said the stranger, gravely. "What you have just said makes easier a difficult mission. There were traces of exhaustion in your attitude as you entered this room. The emotional stress of your work tells upon you."

"I am not physically strong," said Grant, with a slight tremor in his voice, "and my one fear is a mental or bodily breakdown. I do not dread death in itself, but I wish to hold it off until my work is done. Then I shall be content to lie down and rest."

"On that point," said the stranger, with confident urbanity, "I can reassure you. You will live to the age of sixty-three years."

Grant looked up at him quickly.

"Are you a physician?" he asked.

"The very greatest," was the reply. "All human ills yield to my treatment."

"You have not told me your name," said Grant.

"If I did, you would at once recognize it and

need no further confirmation of the truth I tell you regarding my power."

Grant, breathing heavily, drew the back of his hand across his damp brow.

"That gives me thirty-one years of work, if your diagnosis in my case is correct. I can finish the task in ten years."

The stranger smiled and shook his head.

"You cannot finish your task," he said, "in a century. The time is not ripe. You under-estimate the stolid resistance of human stupidity. I have told you that disintegration has already begun in the ranks of your followers. You will be crushed by those you would lead to victory. But if you will accept the conditions I am empowered to offer you, ultimate victory is yours."

"What are the conditions?"

"The first is that you consent to die at this moment, and by my hand. In a future incarnation, your desires will be fulfilled."

Grant looked up quickly, and for a moment endeavoured to rise, but a paralysing weakness held him to the bench. The burning eyes of his guest seemed to penetrate to his very soul.

"This person," he said to himself, "has hypnotized me. I am in the power of a madman, and physically unable to move."

The intensity of the gaze by which he was regarded softened perceptibly, and a sympathetic smile came to the lips of him who sat opposite.

"No," he said, answering the unspoken words, "I am not mad; indeed, I often think I am the only sane person in the world; an opinion that is confirmed when I remember the fantastic notions held of me by those who have studied my character."

Grant ignored this.

"You ask my consent to die by your hand," he said, seeing he must temporize with this undoubted lunatic, "and in return for such consent you make me a vague promise of re-incarnation, at a time more suitable than the present for the purpose I have in view?"

"There is nothing vague about my promise. I quite definitely assure you that if you now prove your quality by giving up your life to a cause, you will in the future be brought into contact with that cause at a crisis when you can direct it towards success or failure, as you choose."

"But then I have only your word that such will be the case, and, if you will pardon my saying so, there is no *data* to go upon which would cause me to place any trust in what you say. I do not even know your name."

"Of course," said the other, graciously, "it would be absurd of me to expect you to take so important a step as I suggest without being convinced of my integrity. If, then, we strike a bargain, I shall previously give you assurances touching my good faith which will be thoroughly convincing."

"But you have practically confessed yourself an assassin?"

"I am the greatest of assassins," replied the other, unabashed.

"Perhaps you came here with the intention of killing me?"

"Oh, that rested entirely with you."

"You will make no attack upon me, then, without my knowledge and consent?"

"Without your ungrudging consent."

Grant breathed a sigh of relief.

"Very well," he said. "Our discussion, sir, is ended. I prefer to bear the ills I have, rather than fly to others I know not of. And now, sir, thanking you for an interesting but fatiguing discourse, I must bid you good afternoon. I am sure you will excuse me. In spite of the sixty-three years of life you guarantee me, I am far from well at the present moment, and wish to lie down for an hour or two."

"You have not yet allowed me to present the convincing credentials whose absence you adverted to a moment ago, and my mission to you will remain unaccomplished unless this is done."

"Sir, you weary me," cried Grant, impatiently. "I have already dismissed you with what courtesy I could bring to my command. Do not, I beg of you, compel me to turn you out by physical force."

"Your case were indeed desperate could relief come to you only through the use of violence. You were never so near death as at the present moment. Your lips are blue, your cheeks pallid, your eyes glassy. Attempt to rise from off the bench on which you are seated, and you will find that slight task impossible."

The speaker rose from his chair, took down from the wall over the washstand a cheap square of looking-glass in a faded gilt frame, and this mirror he held before the eyes of his host.

"Oh, God!" cried Grant, as he found himself looking at the reflection of a man already passed from life. He buried his face in his hands, and groaned. The visitor replaced the looking-glass, but did not resume his seat.

"My name is Death," he said. "All men see

me once ; but it is your privilege, if you make the choice, to meet me twice. You may live at your option. Thirty-one years from to-day I shall again meet you, and then we will need no introduction. You will beg me for another five years, and finally implore the gift of even six months longer in which to finish your task ; but you will die on the instant, your last earthly remembrance the bitter thought of thirty years' futile work behind you. Have I convinced you that I am Death ? ” rang out the stern, menacing tone of the stranger.

“ No, no, no, no ! ” cried Grant, his face still bowed down into his covering hands.

“ Then call your landlady into this room, and see her fall dead across the threshold the moment her eyes meet mine.”

For a long time Grant did not speak ; then slowly he raised his wan face from its concealment.

“ You have convinced me,” he said. “ We shall not experiment with our good landlady, who, after all, is much more needed in this world than I. My choice is made. On you be the disgrace if you have lied to me. It is perhaps I who am mad, and dying in any case. But if you can put me in a position in coming years to help my kind, I choose death at this moment.”

The good landlady in the room below heard a crash above her head. With physical and vocal energy she had been keeping at bay those who were determined to see Peter Grant.

“ No,” she proclaimed, “ I shall not allow him to be disturbed. The poor young man is just wearing his life out for trash like you. He is resting in his room at this moment, and goodness knows

he needs it, for he looked like a ghost as he crawled up the stair."

At the sound of the noise overhead, the landlady, fearing the worst, ran to the first floor and rapped at the door of her distinguished lodger, of whom she was very proud. With trembling hand she lifted the latch. The room was empty, save for the dead body that had fallen from the bench.

Late that night along Fleet Street, able, but bitter, leading articles already in type were thrown aside, to give place to appreciations, and, even in unexpected quarters, to eulogies of the labour leader whose sudden death in the hour of his triumph was universally deplored.

II

Lord Adrian Bramber, younger son of the Marquis of Bradlebourne, at an early age gave promise of carrying on the political traditions of the Bradlebourne family, which had given three Prime Ministers to England. His elder brother, the present Marquis of Bradlebourne, was fond of quiet country sports, and took little interest in the affairs of the nation. He thought his family had done enough in that line, and the time had come for the head of the house to enjoy himself. Whenever a Marquis of Bradlebourne had been Prime Minister, he was always the best abused man in the country, and the present Marquis loved the simple life.

Lord Adrian was a man of vastly different calibre. Even as a very young man he had become the stormy petrel of British politics. There were one or two people in the country who believed in Lord Adrian, and pointed to the traditions of his family in support of their contention that his lordship would yet

make a name for himself equal, if not superior, to that which any of his ancestors had achieved. But the bulk of the British people eyed Lord Adrian askance, and although acknowledging his brilliancy, shook their wise heads in distrust of it. Lord Adrian had been as erratic as an uncharted comet. He was first elected to Parliament as a Socialist, defeating three candidates belonging respectively to the Conservative, Liberal, and Labour parties. This success was greatly resented by his family, which had been Tory since Henry VIII's time, and they regarded the errant younger son with the horror they would have evinced had he committed forgery. However, it was not long before his lordship of the bitter tongue quarrelled with the Socialists, and in a series of speeches gave his opinion of their leaders in vivid examples of character sketching that set all England laughing, except the victims, for Lord Adrian proved himself to be a master of invective—invective that cut like a whip.

The Socialists were furious, and tried to force Lord Adrian to resign his place in Parliament. This he refused to do, and finally they retired from their contest with him, in which they invariably lost every point in the game, and found themselves covered with ridicule as well as defeated. They had merely succeeded in making the witty, cynical Lord Adrian the best-talked-of young man in the land. Then, when they had sullenly ceased their efforts to dislodge him, his bewildering lordship unexpectedly plunged them into an electoral struggle, for which all parties were unprepared, by suddenly applying for the Chiltern Hundreds. He refused an offer from the Liberals to stand as their

candidate in his late constituency, but accepted an apparently hopeless proposition from the Labour party to be their representative. And now, opposed by a Conservative, a Liberal, and a Socialist, after a most original and daring campaign that concentrated attention even from abroad upon this practically unknown constituency in the north, he won the seat by the narrow margin of seventeen votes over his Liberal competitor, whilst the Socialist candidate stood at the bottom of the poll, hopelessly beaten by everybody, in a riding that at the General Election had returned Lord Adrian as a Socialist.

During this historic contest the omens seemed in favour of Lord Adrian becoming the aristocratic leader of the most democratic party in the state. It was pointed out that Lord Adrian had been born in the year that the Labour party had come so near to scoring a great success under the capable leadership of Peter Grant, whose dominion over the Labour party was unchallenged at the time of his sudden death, after his great speech in Hyde Park. And, indeed, it was pointed out that Lord Adrian himself was not unlike the lamented Grant, whose untimely fate the working men of Britain still deplored. Lord Adrian was tall and gaunt and spare, looking like an unfrocked monk. But there the resemblance ceased. His lordship enjoyed to the full the self-indulgent life of an aristocratic man-about-town, and he differed from Peter Grant in this, that he expressed no admiration for the working man, nor, indeed, any exuberant sympathy with his circumstances. It was speedily shown that although, in spite of lack of flattery, Lord Adrian became more and more popular with the rank and file of the Labour party, he became less

and less so with the leaders, and it began to be rumoured in the Press that all was not going well within the Labour party, and to the amazement alike of his friends and his enemies, he became the candidate for the most reactionary section of the dyed-in-the-wool Tories, and for the first time in its history the constituency was represented by a Conservative.

Lord Adrian became more and more a puzzle to Press and politicians alike. A man who had won entrance into Parliament in the same constituency first as a Socialist, and third as a Tory, had accomplished rather a unique feat. Some newspapers held that his personal popularity had triumphed over the voters' principles, but this explanation was scarcely convincing, for all the world knew that Lord Adrian cared nothing for personal popularity, and made no attempt whatever to attain it. Indeed, with a wilfulness that was one of his numerous defects of character, Lord Adrian often alienated powerful sections of the community by an outspoken antagonism which a more crafty politician would have avoided.

The biography of Lord Adrian Bramber is so well known that his progress to the leadership of the Conservative party need not be here recapitulated. We come to the period when the Liberal Government was tottering to a fall, which was to result in fifteen years' exclusion from office. The cynical Lord Adrian was, as usual, the despair of his followers. He led his party with a nonchalant indifference that exasperated the more strenuous of his lieutenants, and caused deep grumbling to be heard from Conservative voters all over the country. Everyone recognized that Lord Adrian

would be Premier after the approaching General Election, and it needed but a little energy on his part in assailing the moribund holders of power to bring about the inevitable disaster. Nevertheless his lordship made no attack, but allowed the Government of the day to drift unmolested to its doom. The Labour party had become stronger and stronger, at the expense of the Liberals. During the past year and a half every by-election that was lost by a Conservative, returned not a Liberal, but a Labour member. It is possible that a capable Liberal Premier might have saved the situation by amalgamating Liberals, Labour leaders, and Socialists into one new party to fight the common enemy of Conservatism, but the Liberal Premier was as stale as his party, and had lost a grip of things.

At last the Government resigned, and now Lord Adrian called together the heads of his party in an important and secret conference, which took place in the room of the Leader of the Opposition, in the House of Commons. It is a matter of record that this conclave dissolved in an enthusiastic mood, eager for the coming fight. It was admitted on all hands that Lord Adrian had completely dominated the situation, and that his plan of campaign had been adopted without a dissenting voice. The aristocratic leader of the aristocratic party had shown an innate comprehension of democracy's fickleness. He had refused to move in compliance with iterated and reiterated popular demand, but now, when the bugle sounded for battle, he showed himself a general of genius, with plans so well thought out and matured that it was the universal belief the fight was won before the first shot was fired.

When the last of his colleagues had departed Lord Adrian sat alone in his room where the conference had taken place, pondering deeply over the situation. All night the meeting had lasted, for, abandoning his usual method of procedure, Lord Adrian sat silent as chairman of the conclave, and allowed every man to speak as long and discursively as he pleased, without interrupting the orator himself, or allowing any one else to do so. Each in turn ventilated his views, and thus the long night was worn through. As daylight began to dim the electricity within the room, Lord Adrian, without commenting, or criticizing anything that had been said, spoke for seventeen minutes, tersely and to the point. He gave no advice, but merely issued commands, and then dismissed his audience, seeking no counsel, and permitting neither interruption nor discussion, thus taking for himself what he allowed to each of the others.

He had been alone perhaps for half an hour when he looked up suddenly as if expecting some one and wondering at his delay. He saw seated there a middle-aged, commonplace man, dressed in the conventional fashion of the middle-class, holding on his knee a glossy silk hat. The stranger smiled as the Leader of the Opposition met his glance.

"Is there any need that I should introduce myself?" he asked.

"None in the least," replied Lord Adrian.

"Do you remember my former visit to you?"

"In Shadwell, when I was Peter Grant? Yes; the picture of your presence in that squalid room is the most vivid possession of my brain; so much so, indeed, that many more important incidents of my present life are made to pale before it."

"In that case, then, I need not take the trouble to prove to you that you lived at least one other life before your present career began?"

"I think," said his lordship, nonchalantly, "that we are all more or less conscious of having lived before, and more or less hopeful we shall live again."

"True; but in your case, my lord, your knowledge of a previous existence is definite, which cannot be said of the vague belief held by the ordinary man. You know that you, Lord Adrian Bramber, of the House of Commons, were once Peter Grant, of Shadwell."

"Also of the House of Commons. Yes, I know that."

"It is probably your belief that after the next General Election you will be Prime Minister of England?"

"Some of my friends are flattering enough to make such a prediction."

"My lord, I am glad to find both the past and the future are so clearly defined in your consciousness. My visit here to-night is for the purpose of learning whether or not the compact through which you obtained your present existence is as minutely remembered by your lordship as the other incidents to which you referred."

His lordship smiled—that superior smile which on occasion exasperated his opponents both in the country and in the House of Commons. He gazed up at the ceiling for some moments before replying, bringing down his eyes at last until they embraced his visitor within their view. The smile continuing, Lord Adrian spoke.

"Sir, I find myself taking objection to your word

‘compact.’ A compact indicates that there are two parties who, in making it, undertake mutual obligations one to the other. In our case, you made me a specified offer concerning a further life, if I on my part consented to die at that particular moment. I did so consent, and fulfilled my obligation to you. You, on your part, have faithfully carried out what you had promised. You are perhaps technically justified in using the word ‘compact,’ for jurists might hold that our arrangement bears that complexion; but admitting such to be the case, I assert that the so-called compact has terminated through the mutual fulfilment of its conditions. I am therefore at a loss to understand for what purpose you have visited me in this room to-night.”

“Lord Adrian Bramber, my recollection of the compact’s terms differs slightly from yours, and when I state them you will need no further explanation of the object of my visit. Your consenting to die at that particular moment was merely one of the conditions—a preliminary condition to the grant of a further life which could not preclude you from remembering what had happened in your previous existence. I have fulfilled my obligation, and you, I trust, are on the point of fulfilling yours.”

“May I ask you, sir, what you suppose my further obligations to be?”

“My lord, you were to be placed in a position where, by word of mouth or stroke of pen, you could benefit labour to an extent quite impossible in your then situation in life. That advantage you have now attained. It was in case you did not grasp the possibilities of the crisis that I have been sent the second time to discuss the matter with you.”

"I am sure," said his lordship, amiably, "that I am always willing to learn, and anything you may find to say will receive my closest attention."

"My lord, do you feel the same interest in the condition of the working class that you did when you belonged to that class?"

Lord Adrian pressed his finger-tips together, and he beamed with half-amused benevolence upon his questioner.

"I think I may safely assert that my interest in the working class is greater than it was at the time of which you speak, but it is also more enlightened, and even to gain success I should hesitate to sanction the methods that Peter Grant was quite prepared to use."

"My lord," cried his interlocutor, with a gesture of impatience, "Peter Grant possessed this advantage over Adrian Bramber, that he was able to give a direct and unequivocal answer to a question. You beat about the bush like a politician."

"Perhaps you will be good enough to ask the question to which you wish a direct answer."

"Very well. Will you publicly propose the amalgamation of the Labour party with the Conservatives?"

"No."

"Thank you, my lord: that answer is direct enough."

"Yes; it is direct enough, and therefore incomplete and misleading. The moment is not ripe for what you propose. I am well aware that such a junction means the ultimate disappearance of the Conservative party. Our most prominent members would desert us and join the Liberal ranks, but those who remained with us would act as a

moderating influence on the Labourites, with the ultimate result that an invincible new party would arise in the land, confronted only by the Liberals, who would then be reactionary, belying its name. Successfully to make the amalgamation you have suggested, I need the authority which comes from the office of Premier, and my first duty to the Labour party itself is to see that I attain that office."

The visitor rose, with a thin, sarcastic smile on his lips.

"You believe, then, you would lose the next General Election if you were now to propose this combination?"

"Inevitably."

"And the next again?"

"Almost certainly."

"The third General Election?"

"That we might win, with a precarious majority."

"And although you are a young man, you cannot wait?"

"Oh, I can wait, but, as I tell you, I do not think the waiting game is good tactics."

"In other words, my lord, you are determined to be Premier at all costs?"

"Lord Adrian shrugged his shoulders.

"If you care to put it that way, yes. Of course my motives will be impugned on all sides, but my conscience compels me to do what I think is best for the country. My orders have already gone forth to my lieutenants, and the coming election will be a straight, stand-up fight between the Liberals and the Tories, in which the latter will win, hands down. I shall not even make a bid for the Labour or Socialist vote. The Liberals are more

than welcome to it ; but I am determined to show the Labour leaders that there is no help for them except through an alliance with the Conservatives. The temper of the country is such that we are bound to win. I cannot, as a capable general, ignore my opportunity, which is practical, for a beautiful idea which is theoretical."

" I bid you good night, my lord. The privations through which Peter Grant attained manhood have found a poor substitute in the life of indulgence lived by Adrian Bramber ; but you will make an excellent conventional Premier : a safe man, they will call you, in spite of your vagaries of youth. But your name will sink into that oblivion which scarcely more than half a dozen British Premiers have escaped, and so good luck to you, my lord, in your certainty of a present success."

The future Premier found himself alone. He yawned, smiled, and went to bed as the sun rose.

The Watermead Affair

I

JOHAN TRUMBLE, seventh Earl of Watermead, was notoriously the best driver of a motor in London. The police admitted that, even when giving testimony against him.

Watermead Manor is not much more than sixty miles from London, but when the young man did the distance from his park gates to the Marble Arch in fifty-six minutes on his new Brusier-Grolier, a machine of the same make which, to the eternal glory of France, had won the Gordon-Bennett Cup that year, the bench of magistrates universally agreed that his lordship had not only gone too far, but too fast.

The excuse which he gave the bench on this occasion came near to augmenting his fine.

He said that he had been a week at Watermead, and suddenly there occurred to him the thought of the dreamy beauty of the Marble Arch.

England, he said, was deficient in the artistic sense, and in order that the impression might not pass away from him, and thus be lost forever, he leaped upon his motor, and came as quickly as he could to view the Marble Arch by moonlight ; and his lordship assured the bench, almost with tears

in his eyes, that the sight of the grimy marble had filled his mind with poetic thought, which should be encouraged in these days of commercialism.

The senior magistrate drily remarked that his position compelled him to take the commercial, rather than the poetic, view of his lordship's action, whereupon he fined him a sum about as near to the maximum as he could get without actually reaching it.

Yet it was but two days later that his lordship gave the Pullman express from Brighton three minutes' start, overtook it, passed it, and would have beaten it into London had not the authorities, warned by telegraph, placed a barrier across the road south of Croydon, although they allowed the express to pass through, which Lord Watermead held was unfair treatment.

He accused the express of furious loitering, to the exasperation of all passengers, and held that he should be commended for consenting to teach that train its duty. Instead of approval he received censure, and was mulcted a fine as heavy as the law allowed.

He always referred to this race with the Brighton express as a delightful leisurely episode in an otherwise fast life, and claimed with pride that there had then been applied to him, for the first time in England, the term "Road-hog."

Readers of newspapers will remember the parallels which were drawn by talented writers between Lord Watermead's life and his motoring career. Twice, because of his reckless driving, grave magistrates had expressed regret that the law did not allow them to send his lordship to prison.

The journal which had applied to him the desig-

nation of "Road-hog" consoled itself and the frightened public by the prediction that some day his lordship's wrist would act less quickly and less timely than the occasion demanded, with the result that his lordship and his three-thousand-pound automobile would be involved in one conclusive smash.

On several occasions his own solicitors had warned him that he was going the pace that kills : not on the king's highway, but along the path of life he had chosen for himself.

To all these danger-signals his lordship paid not the slightest attention, and when his solicitors sent him a registered letter, urgently pointing out, as tersely as legal language would allow, that on a certain day he must appear in His Majesty's Court, the Earl of Watermead, did not even do the writers the honour of reading their communication, but had his valet carry out the rubbish, as he termed the heap delivered by the postman, which experience taught him consisted mainly of duns. The information which the solicitors sought to impart was therefore conveyed to him through another channel.

After a slight breakfast at two in the afternoon he strolled out into Piccadilly from his town house in the hope that a gentle walk would relieve the annoying headache which had made the day open gloomily for him, and when he had reached Piccadilly Circus he was startled, so far as such a self-contained man could be, by seeing in huge black letters on the contents-bill of the evening papers the words :

BANKRUPTCY OF THE EARL OF WATERMEAD.

And on another sheet, in equally striking type, he read the phrase :

A FOOL AND HIS MONEY.

The End of Lord Watermead's Extravagance.

He bought a paper, thrust it into his pocket, and turned slowly homeward again, his headache no better for the stroll.

"I suppose I'll have to go see those bally solicitors," muttered his lordship to himself. "I wonder why they allowed things to get into this cursed mess. They are paid to keep me out of that sort of thing. A fool and his money, eh?"

Six years before, at the age of twenty-one, John Trumble had come into the estate of Watermead, the town house, the Scotch shooting, and an income of thirty thousand pounds a year. Surely, if the solicitors were the business men they pretended to be, they could have got along with so much as that to work upon, especially as he never made any objection to signing whatever was presented to him!

Letting himself in with his latch-key, he was confronted by a burly, deferential person, so evidently belonging to the lower classes that his lordship wondered why he had been admitted. A slight uplifting of his lordship's eyebrows indicated the question which the lips did not utter, and the stranger hastened to reply, hat in hand, punctuating his remarks with frequent uplifting of the forefinger to the brow.

"My name is Bloggs, m'lord. I'm one of the men in possession, m'lord."

"Ah, really," replied his lordship courteously.

"All the servants have gone, m'lord. Your

valet was the last to go, and he asked me to keep out of sight until he got your lordship's breakfast."

"That was very thoughtful," said John Trumble.

"And so, m'lord, we keeps out of your lordship's sight until your lordship goes out half an hour since."

"That was very kind of you," acknowledged Trumble. He thrust a hand into one pocket and found it empty. In the other, however, he came in contact with a solitary half-crown, which he produced and presented to the bowing Bloggs.

"Do you happen to know if my chauffeur has gone as well? If not, would you mind asking him to bring round No. 16 to the door?"

The day before the Earl of Watermead had owned sixteen automobiles, and the one he indicated by the number mentioned was the celebrated Brusier-Grolier. The modest Bloggs coughed slightly behind his hand.

"I'm afraid, m'lord, he's gone, but even if he was here he wouldn't be allowed to take away anything from the premises, m'lord. You see, they're taking an inventory, and our man with a man from your solicitors are a-doing of it at this moment, and nothing must leave the 'ouse without permission of the Court, m'lord."

"How interesting! Why should they be afraid of any one taking things away?"

"Well, m'lord, it's frequently done, or frequently attempted, in cases like this. You see, m'lord, everything must be produced at the sale, and we that are here are responsible for the safe-keeping of all the valuables."

"The sale?" echoed his lordship, and for the first time a slight frown ruffled his brow. "The

sale? Ah, there's going to be a sale, is there? Quite so, quite so!"

He turned and went out, leaving the deferential Bloggs standing there. Once in Piccadilly again Trumble was about to call a cab, when he remembered that the extraction of the half-crown had left his pockets empty. Recollecting a spot where his signature on a cheque was good for ten pounds, his lordship turned down St. James's Street and made for his club. Here he wrote out a cheque for that amount, handed it to a servant, who returned shortly afterward with the document still in his hand, and said in a hushed whisper:

"I am very sorry, my lord, but the secretary is not in."

"Very well," remarked Trumble shortly, thrusting the crumpled slip of paper into his empty pocket. He knew that the absence or presence of the secretary had nothing to do with the cashing of a cheque, and the thought crossed his mind—it had not occurred to him before—that, if there was a man in possession of his house, there was doubtless another in charge of his bank-account.

After all, it didn't much matter. He would merely need to borrow from one of his friends until the solicitors straightened out the tangle. He strolled into the smoking-room, which he found empty except for the presence of Sir William Dillow, who was standing by a table, languidly turning over the pages of some of the weeklies.

"Billy," said Trumble, "lend me fifty pounds till to-morrow."

"Hello, Johnny; that you?" cried Sir William cheerfully, looking up. "I've been waiting for you. Wanted to borrow a fiver. You don't mean to

tell me you're stony broke, old man? Nothing serious in this rot the papers are printing, is there? "

" Can't say until I've seen my solicitors," replied Johnny rather disconsolately, thrusting his hands into his empty pockets.

" Oh, I suppose it just means the Continent for a bit, and there's some jolly places over in France when a man's down on his luck," rejoined Sir William encouragingly; then he suddenly pulled out his watch and ejaculated, " By Jove! " in a tone almost of terror.

" I came near to forgetting an important appointment," he explained hurriedly as he left the room.

Johnny followed more leisurely, and when he paused irresolute at the top of the steps Sir William had disappeared.

" Hansom, m'lord? " inquired a cabby, dashing up to the kerb and raising the handle of the whip to his cap.

" No, thanks," said Johnny almost gruffly. He saw that the cabby had just tucked under the strap that evening paper which had alluded to the case of a fool and his money. As he walked up the street the cabby slowly kept pace with him.

" Anywhere you like, m'lord," said the insistent man, bending from his perch.

" If you *must* know it," protested Johnny, " I haven't a bally penny in my pocket. Now make off with you."

" Right you are, m'lord. Step inside, m'lord. Where to m'lord? "

The sporting proclivities of the Earl of Watermead had made him a great favourite with the cabmen of London. Johnny recognized the friend-

liness of the invitation, and after a moment's pause stepped inside, saying briefly, "The Temple."

"I'll wait for you, m'lord," said the cabby, as he drew up opposite the court which contained the offices of Watermead's solicitors. Johnny did not answer: an unaccustomed contraction of the throat made him reluctant to trust his voice. Things had come to a fine pass if quondam friends refused him accommodation, and he had to depend on the charity of a cabby.

Despondently, therefore, the fool mounted the stairs which led to the chambers of the grim men who had often warned him of the consequences of his folly. Even here he was kept waiting in the anteroom for a few minutes, and then the clerk conducted him into the presence of Mr. Rolls himself.

"Well, Rolls, we seem to have got into a bally mess," began his lordship with a jauntiness he was far from feeling.

Mr. Rolls gravely inclined his head.

"I bought a paper this morning, but I haven't had time to read it. What is it all about, Rolls?"

The solicitor explained the situation in cold, legal terms which left nothing missing in the way of definiteness.

"Do you mean to say everything will be sold,—jewels and all?" asked Johnny.

"Everything, my lord, except the heirlooms."

"Ain't I allowed to keep something, one automobile, for instance?"

The lawyer slowly shook his head.

"My lord," he said, "you have no legal right to the rings on your fingers, or the watch in your waistcoat pocket."

Johnny looked for a moment at the back of his outstretched hand, then he pulled off the rings and laid these ornaments on the table before the gentleman of law. Next he placed the watch and chain beside them. Old Mr. Rolls seemed taken aback by this action. He explained with some care, speaking as one fearing to commit himself to any illegal action :

“ I am not the official custodian of such treasures, my lord. Perhaps it may be well to retain them until the Receiver makes formal application.”

“ Oh, very well, I’ll keep the watch till it’s asked for. The rings may go in with the rest of the plunder. Come to think of it, I never cared much about them, but Dolly presented them to me, and so I wore them.”

The old man’s brow lowered, and he commented severely :

“ And I’ve no doubt she allowed the bill to be sent to you as well as the jewelry.”

The young man laughed.

“ Perhaps she did,” he replied, nevertheless brightening at the thought of sweet, pretty, artless, little Dolly Carmichael, whose presence in the cast of that delightful comedy, *The Spider and the Fly*, was filling one of the largest theatres in London, where her beauty was so superior to either her singing or her acting that she was undoubtedly one of the greatest dramatic successes of the year.

But the thought which brightened the countenance of the young man cast a gloom over that of his elder, who said coldly :

“ There is only one folly left for you to commit, my lord, and that is a penniless marriage,” for old

Mr. Rolls remembered the items which of late had been floating about in the society papers, hinting at the prospects of the fascinating Dolly's joining the aristocracy.

The young man was thinking what an ass he had been to apply to that beast Dillow for fifty pounds when Dolly would have been overjoyed to lend him the money for a day or two. A man, of course, could not take money from a woman except as a loan, and that to be as promptly repaid as if it were a gambling debt.

"The court allows you," continued Mr. Rolls, "one hundred pounds a month until such time as your creditors are satisfied."

"A hundred pounds a month!" echoed the young man in dismay. "What can a fellow do on such a sum as that?"

"There are many living in London at the present moment on less," responded the old gentleman with the air of finality which one uses when making a statement that cannot be questioned.

"How long will it be before everything is straightened out!" inquired Trumble.

"That will depend entirely on the product of the sale. If the articles you have bought fetch anything like what you paid for them, the law will soon have little claim upon you."

"Ah, some of the things are at a premium. Three at least of the automobiles are." Then he laughed quietly to himself. "But a good deal of the jewelry is where the courts won't get their hands on it, I think. Still, there's no good crying over spilt milk. Let me have the twelve hundred for the first year, and I won't trouble you any longer."

"I didn't say twelve hundred a year," replied

the lawyer. "I said one hundred pounds a month."

"Same thing, isn't it?" asked the Earl.

"No, my lord, it is not. There is now due to you one hundred pounds. Another hundred pounds will be paid on the first of next month."

His lordship whistled.

"Very well. Hand over the hundred. I'm stony broke."

The money was counted out to him and his receipt taken, whereupon his lordship went downstairs and handed the waiting cabman a golden sovereign.

"Thank you, m'lord. Where to, m'lord?"

"Half Moon Street," said the Earl, stepping into the cab.

The cabby smiled. He did not need to be told the number. He knew well the residence of the charming Miss Dolly Carmichael.

II

The cab was compelled to draw up at a little distance from the door, because Sir William Dillow's thirty-horse-power Hardpan was opposite the front. The Earl recognized the machine. He dismissed the cabman with a word of thanks, and rang the bell.

"Not at home, my lord," said the powdered footman.

"I think," protested the Earl mildly, "that if you take my name, you will find that the lady is in."

"Not at home, my lord," repeated the footman,

which left no doubt in the hearer's mind that the instructions had been definite.

Before the door could be closed he heard the sweet, silvery, rippling laughter of Dolly in the hallway, a tribute to some remark made in the deep bass voice of Sir William Dillow. A moment later the pair appeared upon the threshold, Dolly as becomingly costumed as an automobile outfit would permit. She gave utterance to a little half-hysterical shriek on seeing Trumble standing there, but the young man's face was wreathed in smiles.

"How do you do, Dolly?" he said genially. "You look positively charming this afternoon, and a lovely day it is for a spin, too."

"I am so sorry," gasped Dolly, rapidly turning in her mind the first falsehood that came to hand; "but you see I was going out driving, so I said I was at home to nobody."

"Oh, of course!" said Johnny. "That's all right. I quite understand, but you see I recognized Billy's Hardpan here, and I remember the fiver he wanted at the club an hour ago, when I hadn't a penny in my pocket. Glad to accommodate you, Billy."

And with this he airily tendered to Dillow a five-pound note between his first and second fingers, which the other had not the presence of mind to refuse, being a bulky, unready man; so Johnny, lifting his hat to the lady, and waving a genial farewell to the pair, descended the steps with the easy nonchalance of a nobleman sure of his position.

A little later the automobile whizzed past. Sir William had his eyes fixed steadily ahead, and Dolly was gazing at the houses on the opposite side of the street.

The Earl of Watermead smiled grimly, and walked on and on. He crossed the river by some unnoted bridge, wandered through hideous streets, came out into a wider, tram-crowded thoroughfare, passed great emporiums the names of which were unfamiliar to him, and where the chief attraction to buyers was the prices displayed on big cards where the penny was split into farthings. He arrived at a park or common, and through that into the suburbs of a city to him unknown.

Lower and lower descended the sun, and on and on he walked. His headache was gone and forgotten, and a healthy hunger reminded him of the scanty breakfast taken at two o'clock. He began to feel physically tired, and rested with his arms stretched on the top of a fence against which he leaned, and regarded with intense gaze a brand-new villa.

Although he stared at it, he did not actually see the villa, nor the card in the window announcing that this desirable residence was to let. He saw instead Watermead Manor, sixty miles away, and tried to imagine the bailiffs in possession, and the consternation of the old retainers who had not grabbed what they could and escaped, like the servants in his town house.

And yet, although his headache was gone, one thing rankled in his mind, and during the long walk had come to rankle more and more, and that was the phrase about the fool and his money.

The sentence had not affected him in the least when he first saw it, but now, somehow, the realization that his money was gone, mostly among a lot of people who would not raise a finger to help him when a crisis came, angered and annoyed

him. He agreed emphatically with that poster, and prefixed a wicked word before the term fool. His reverie was broken by an apologetic cough at his side, and then an inquiry :

“ Are you thinking of taking this villa, sir ? ”

He turned abruptly on his questioner, and saw standing there a young man of about his own age, quite evidently an extremely respectable clerk, and not a disreputable nobleman. There was a trace of anxiety in the voice that had accosted him, and a trace of eagerness in the inquirer's face.

The Earl at once set him down as an assistant in a land-agent's office, who hoped to make a commission by letting the villa, and his naturally kind disposition made him hesitate about damping the other's hopes by an abrupt “ No.”

“ Well,” said his lordship frankly, “ it seems, as the card says, a desirable residence, and then it's so nice and new.”

“ It's all that,” replied the other with an air of despondency, “ and it's bound to be snapped up before long, although it's rather dear. They want thirty pounds a year for it,” he added in a note of warning.

“ Bless my soul,” exclaimed the Earl, “ you don't mean to tell me so ! Are you interested in the letting of it ? ”

“ In a way I am. That is to say, I hope it won't be let for a while yet, because I should like to take it myself.”

“ Then why the deuce don't you ? ”

“ I'd do it quick enough if I had another twenty-five pounds to my name.”

“ Ah, that's the trouble, is it ? Well, money is not so easily picked up as some people think.”

"It is not," replied the young man emphatically. "You see, I get a hundred and fifty a year, and we could pay the rent and live very well on that, but then there's the furniture, and though I've got a bit saved, yet it's not enough to do justice to so fine a house."

"It *is* rather gorgeous," admitted the Earl, gazing again at the little villa. "But can't you get furniture on the what-you-call-it system, paying a bit at a time? Seems to me I've seen advertisements to that effect."

"Oh yes," replied the stranger, "and that's what I'd like to do, but my sister-in-law thinks we shouldn't start by getting into debt."

"Ah, you're a married man then?" suggested his lordship, interest awakening in spite of himself.

"No, not yet, but by the greatest piece of luck in the world I have become engaged to a girl who is far too good for me. She is a lady, and the daughter of our clergyman."

"I see, and the clergyman objected, or I venture to say his wife did."

"No, but the elder daughter did. The mother has been dead for some years, and the clergyman is a man absorbed in his books. He doesn't seem to take interest in anything else, but Kate—that's the eldest daughter—is very proud, and thinks gentlefolks ought to marry in their own class."

"Really! Well, gentlemen are not so bally particular, are they?" said the Earl, flinging back a lingering thought to Dolly, seated beside Sir William in the automobile, with her face turned away.

"Kate gave her consent at last, because Mary—that's my girl—just seemed to droop away when

Kate refused to hear of our engagement. Of course, the father didn't count."

"And the drooping business did it?" remarked the Earl flippantly. "It's a powerful weapon that, with the women who know how to handle it."

The stranger seemed offended at this light way of talking about so serious a subject. He remained silent, and the Earl, quickly regretting his cynicism, said cordially:

"Do you mean to tell me that twenty-five pounds stands between two young people and happiness? That's absurd. I never knew happiness could be bought so cheaply. Take the villa, marry the girl in spite of the elder sister, and here's the twenty-five pounds."

III

The clerk's mild blue eyes opened wide, with first a glimmer of alarm in them, which presently kindled to a spark of resentment as the suspicion awakened that he was being played with—his sacred confidence made the subject of an ill-timed joke. He shrank back a step, and placed his right hand on the fence-rail to steady himself.

A very winning smile hovered round his lordship's lips as he noticed the speechless confusion of the young fellow confronting him.

"There are various perplexities floating through your mind at the present moment, none of which matters in the least. Let me assure you that there is but one problem in this transaction which merits your attention."

"What is that?" asked the clerk huskily.

"Whether these notes are genuine or not. Take them round to the nearest tradesman, and he will solve the question for you."

"I don't need to do that," murmured the clerk. "I finger many a note, although I own so few of them."

"Then finger these," said the Earl.

The clerk took them like a man in a dream, and very expertly ran each of the five crisp, crackling bits of white paper between finger and thumb.

"Yes, they're good enough," he muttered.

He gazed at the villa, feeling the need of mental support, as the moment before he had felt the need of physical support against the fence. The villa stood there in its red-brick commonplaceness. It required all its smug conventionality to give even a semblance of saneness to the situation.

"My name's Richard Maitland. I'm an accountant in the city on three pounds a week. May I ask who you are?" The thought of the city, the influence of the villa, were having their effect. The young man had pulled himself together.

The Earl laughed at the recovery.

"My name is John Trumble," he replied.

"What's your line?"

"My line? My occupation, you mean?" His eyes scrutinized the gravel at his feet for a moment, then he looked up frankly. "I am by way of being a chauffeur."

"A chauffeur? Ah, there's good money in that, I'm told. Are you out of a job?"

"Yes."

"Why did you leave your last place?"

"I didn't. It left me."

"For whom were you working?"

"The Earl of Watermead."

"What, the chap who went smash?"

"Exactly. The chap who went smash."

"Then this is some of his money?" said Maitland, with a tone of relief he took no pains to conceal.

The Earl laughed with more heartiness than had hitherto been the case.

"You have tracked the notes to their origin with the infallibility of a detective. Great Heavens, how suspicious you are! What did you take me for? A burglar?"

"No, no," protested Maitland hurriedly. "Anyone can see at a glance you are an honest man. No, what I was thinking about was another job. I know a man who wants a chauffeur: Doctor Mead, who lives next door to the Reverend Mr. Errol. I don't think he'd like to give more than thirty shillings a week, though.

"You see, it's rather a small car: a doctor's car, they call it, but he doesn't seem able to manage it himself. He's getting on in years, is Mr. Mead, and he's afraid of it, but his practice is growing, and he wants to keep up with the times. You would have your board and lodging, of course."

"Why, that's splendid," said the Earl, without as much enthusiasm in his voice as his statement might have inferred. "You're a fine chap, Maitland, thinking more of another man's welfare than your own. Let's get back to your affairs. May I take it that the villa is secured, and the wedding bells will ring presently?"

A shade of doubt crossed Maitland's face.

"I don't quite know what to say to Kate."

"That's the sister, is it?"

" Yes."

" The terror of the household, eh ? "

" Oh, no, no ! But Kate's a girl you can't lie to. Mary would believe anything I told her, but you must have a very straight story if you are to meet those steady, honest eyes of Kate."

" How inconvenient," commented the Earl. " Then why not tell her the truth—as a last resort ? "

Maitland glanced at the five-pound notes in his hand, then turned his gaze resolutely on the villa once more. He sighed deeply.

" If you think I can tell Kate Erroll that I met a complete stranger in the street who handed over twenty-five pounds to me without security and without my asking for the money, well——" Here speech failed him. Then, with a sudden burst of resolution, he cried : " Here, I can't take your money. You're out of a job, and I'm not."

" Don't worry about me," said the Earl, pulling from his trousers' pocket nearly seventy pounds in notes and gold.

" I cannot accept the money," replied Maitland with decision.

Trumble received it back, and thrust it into his pocket, then, placing his hand on the other's shoulder, he said :

" You arouse a certain amount of opposition. I am accustomed to having my own way, but this seems an exceptional day, and I have been check-mated several times already. I see, however, what's the trouble with you. You are afraid of Kate."

" Yes, I am," admitted Maitland.

" Kate is the old-maid sister ? "

" Oh, no, she isn't ; She's not twenty-two yet."

"Not pretty, then, and perhaps a little jealous of her sister's good fortune?"

Maitland made a gesture of impatience.

"She's the handsomest girl in the neighbourhood, but holds herself aloof."

"Distant, and a little proud, perhaps. I see. Nevertheless, you're afraid of her. I'm not. How far from here is the rectory, or the vicarage, or whatever it is?"

"About a quarter of a mile."

"Good. We can't get a cab in this forlorn spot, but the walk won't hurt us. Lead me to Kate, and introduce me."

"Will you come?" asked Maitland eagerly, the light in his eyes vacillating between hope and fear.

"Come? Am I not imploring you to take me? I am beginning to suspect you of selfishness, trying to get out of your promise regarding that medical situation at thirty bob a week, with board and lodging."

"No, I hadn't forgotten that. Come along."

They left this newer section of the district and penetrated into wide and shady streets, with a look of homely comfort about them. Each house stood in its own plot, and some of the older-fashioned residences were surrounded by grounds unexpectedly ample, with broad green lawns, large trees and thick shrubberies."

The rectory proved to be one of these secluded spots, the walls of thick green allowing no portion of the grounds to be seen from the road, except at the gate. The house was a low and long two-storied building, the ground-floor windows reaching down to the green lawn. Maitland paused almost in awe with his hand on the gate.

"You understand now," he said in a low voice, "what it means to a man in my position to be received in a home like this."

"I see," replied the Earl with that frank smile of his. "You are marrying above you, as the penny novelettes have it, and you'd like to caution me for your sake to try and make a good impression upon the inmates. All right, I'll do my best; but remember, it's the man without fear who conquers. I fancy you are holding yourself too humbly."

"No, I wasn't going to say that, but I should have told you that Miss Erroll is a most accomplished, well-read young lady, who——"

"Yes, I know, I know. Will you open the gate, or shall I?"

Maitland opened the gate. In the most secluded part of the grounds, under the branches of an ancient gigantic beech, a tea-table was spread. Beside it, in a deep arm-chair of cane, sat a venerable gentleman with a huge book open upon his knee. A very trim, prim maid, in white and black, was bringing a plate of cake across the level lawn.

A fluffy girl, with fluffy auburn hair, in a fluffy white dress, was seated on a little camp stool, and when she heard the gate click, and saw who had come in, she sprang to her feet with a delicious little child-like cry of joy, and raced across the lawn to meet them. A taller, darker girl stood by the tea-table, her serious, beautiful face turned toward the new-comers.

"Ah," said the Earl softly, "that's Kate, is it?" as he met the unwavering regard of those fine eyes.

"No, this is Mary," said Maitland innocently,

and when she had come up to them : “ My friend, Mr. Trumble—Miss Mary Erroll.”

Mary shook hands very cordially with the stranger, then she whisked round, linked arms with her lover, and thus the trio approached the standing Diana of the tea-table, whose air of quiet dignity lacked the exuberant welcome which the other had impetuously extended.

“ Miss Erroll,” said Maitland, a little waveringly, deference and gentle beseechment in his voice, “ my friend, Mr. Trumble.”

The young lady inclined her head. “ Mr. Erroll—Mr. Trumble.”

The old man paid no attention. His elder daughter put her hand gently on his shoulder.

“ Father ! ” she said.

He looked up at her, saw the stranger and nodded.

“ You are very welcome, sir.” Then, including Richard in his smile, sank once more into his book, and it was quite evident a moment later that the company and his daughters had vanished from the face of the earth so far as he was concerned.

“ We’ve been expecting you, Richard, for nearly half an hour,” said Kate reproachfully.

“ Yes, I was—I was—er—unexpectedly detained—er—I met—I went round to the villa, you see, and—er——”

“ It is all my fault, Miss Erroll,” interrupted the Earl calmly. “ I held him, as the wedding guest was held on a former occasion.”

The girl looked intently at him. She had seen well-dressed young men before, but there was something in the cut and fit of Trumble’s clothes that was different ; something in his air of nonchalance that was different ; something in the almost insolent

ease with which he seated himself in the wicker chair which the maid had brought, that Miss Erroll had never met with before. However, he did not seat himself until she had done so ; then he went on indolently :

“ Not only did I detain him, but in the most unblushing way I begged an invitation to accompany him.”

“ I am very glad he brought you,” said the young woman coldly. “ And now may I give you some tea ? ”

“ You may give *me* some tea,” said John Trumble smiling, “ but my friend Maitland must wait. You see, Miss Erroll, I am by way of being a chauffeur out of employment, and Maitland was good enough to say he thought the doctor next door might employ me. Maitland, you must know how often these affairs are jeopardized by even a moment’s delay. I implore you to see Doctor Mead at once, and I suggest that Miss Mary here go with you, to use her influence in my favour.”

IV

Kate Erroll leaned back in her chair in dumb amazement at this impudent disposal of her guests by the debonnair young stranger who sat smiling before her. Blank dismay sat on the countenance of Richard Maitland at this inauspicious display of his new friend’s diplomacy, but the tension of the situation was relieved by the volatile Mary, who sprang laughing to her feet.

“ What a good idea ! ” she exclaimed. “ Come along, Dick, and we’ll have tea with Mr. and Mrs.

Mead." With this she whirled her amazed lover to the right-about, and sped before him across the lawn toward a little gate in the boundary hedge, which indicated a certain friendly familiarity between the two households.

Maitland followed doubtfully. Miss Erroll leaned back very still and severe in the seat of judgment, and the young man saw that the verdict was against him by the deep resentment visible on her brow.

"There," he cried airily, "we're quit of them! A pair of self-absorbed lovers are always in the way of sensible people like you and me, Miss Erroll, and, in spite of all that has happened, you *did* promise me a cup of tea, you know."

"Oh, I beg your pardon!" cried Kate, brought to a sudden realization of her own failure as a hostess. "Cream and sugar?" she asked.

"Both, if I may be so greedy."

She passed the cup across the table to him, and as he took it he said with a quiet, almost caressing inflection:

"I understand it all now: it seemed incomprehensible when I first saw you."

"You understand what?" asked the girl shortly.

"Why Richard is afraid of you."

"Afraid of me?" she questioned, startled out of the impassiveness she had imposed upon herself. "Richard is not in the least afraid of me!"

"Oh, he lives in a state of abject terror, which seemed to me unmanly when I learned of it! But now that I have seen those eyes of yours darken, and watched the gathering lightning in their depths, comprehension has come to me. Half an hour ago I said rashly to my friend Maitland: 'Take me to

her; I'm not afraid of her.' I don't think I should make such a rash statement now."

There was interest mixed with displeasure in the look with which she steadfastly regarded him.

"You are the most amazing man I ever met, Mr. Trumble."

"I am glad to hear you say so. There are not many amazing men in the world; most of us seem to be cast in the same mould. I think I must be improving. I was one of the conventional lot myself until this morning."

"And what happened this morning?" asked Kate, before she could stop herself.

"Oh, I was startled out of my complacency! I lost my situation as chauffeur."

"You are no chauffeur," she said impulsively.

"Ah, you do me an injustice! If ever you saw me drive an automobile in a difficult place you wouldn't say that."

"If you ever drove an automobile it was your own."

Trumble shook his head, smiling.

"I wish I possessed one," he replied. "But, that I may not thus enter the Garden of Eden under false pretences, I must tell you that everything I own is on my back and in my pocket."

"I do not believe you," she rejoined, the brow still clouded.

"Then my friend Maitland flattered you. He said no one could tell a lie in your presence, and the natural inference was that you would recognize truth when you heard it. I regret to find that such is not the case. I have done many reprehensible things in my life, but no one ever called me a liar before."

"Oh, I beg your pardon ; I have not called you that !"

"People in our circle do not say it crudely, as they do, perhaps, in Whitechapel, but the intimation was there, nevertheless."

"Then I apologize," said Miss Erroll primly.

"I accept your apology unreservedly. And now may I hope that we are back within the lines of friendship again ?"

"What do you mean by friendship, and our circle ?" she asked, to set him back into his place, her eloquent eyes again giving hint of his encroachment.

"Well, Maitland is my oldest and most treasured friend. He is to marry your sister. Therefore I had the temerity to include myself in the circle, and hoped to find friendship within it."

"It is strange I never heard him speak of you before."

"Not strange at all, Miss Erroll, when you consider that an hour ago I did not know he existed, nor was he aware that John Trumble cumbered the earth."

"Then what do you mean," she asked with indignation, "by referring to him as your oldest——" She stopped abruptly, made a gesture of impatience with her two hands and continued :

"I suppose, like most women, I am deficient in a sense of humour, but I may say at once I do not like your style of it."

"Humour, dear lady !" he protested earnestly, leaning toward her, the empty cup in his hand. "Humour ! You call what I have said humour, and entirely fail to see that it is the most pathetic thing you have ever heard !

“ Here am I, a young man of twenty-seven, and I tell you, on my honour, that a stranger I met casually an hour ago is the only friend I have in the world. In God’s name, where do you find humour in that statement ? ”

The girl half rose in her chair, gazing across at him with an expression almost of affright. The ring of sincerity was in his voice, and its tone disturbed even the placid old clergyman, who looked up for a moment from his book, smiled placidly upon them, and returned to his pages once more.

John Trumble, with a shrug of the shoulders and a shake of the head, cast off the mood.

“ Let us get back to practical things ! ” he cried. “ This morning I had the slightest of breakfasts : to-day no lunch : and this afternoon I have tramped miles.”

“ Looking for work ? ” she asked with sympathy.

“ I don’t know what I was looking for : perhaps for this Garden of Eden which I seem to have stumbled into, manifestly to the discomposure of its guardian angel. But let the beggar at your gate implore another cup of tea, and a free hand with this ample plate of bread and butter. No ; no cake, thanks. I confess to being exceedingly hungry.”

“ Oh dear, oh dear ! here have I been acting critic, and utterly failing in my duties as hostess ! ”

She struck the hand-bell on the table with such passionate vehemence that her father nearly jumped out of his chair, then smiled on them and resumed his reading.

“ Not hostess, Miss Erroll—patroness. You have already cast me out of the circle, and I am but the beggar at the gate.”

The maid responded to the appeal, and was told to bring a fresh pot of tea and a plate of chicken and ham. Then Kate turned to her guest with a smile on her lips.

"I am afraid you are rather ruthless, Mr. Trumble. I have already offered you one apology, and now I appear to owe you another, but it seems to me you are rather emphasizing my deficiencies."

"With a purpose, Miss Erroll, and I bid you beware, or I'll pile more on your shoulders, unless you now transfer the whole burden to mine."

"I do not understand you."

"I learned this afternoon that a beggarly twenty-five pounds stood in the way of the happiness of two worthy young people. I offered the man the money, and he took it in a dazed fashion, thinking there was some trick, some catch, some joke; but when he found the notes were real and actually at his disposal, there rose before him the menacing figure of his future sister, Kate.

"She, whom he could not lie to, would never believe the truth. He forced the money back into my possession again.

"I ask you to admire that young man. Is there another in all London who, being tendered twenty-five pounds by a complete stranger, would not grasp the notes and run?

"You could not have persuaded me yesterday that such a man existed. Yet, having found him, I was amazed that he should be terrorized by a woman. There grew up in my mind the picture of Kate: tall, I admit, but thin and vinegary; sharp features, compressed mouth, frowning brow; bitter with the world, or over-righteous, which is

the same thing. 'Take me to Kate,' said I, 'and I'll force her to accept the money.' "

The girl watched him breathless, like one fascinated. When he paused she murmured :

"And you found the task infinitely harder than you had expected? "

"No, infinitely easier. Instead of harshness, I find sympathy ; instead of old-maidish jealousy, I detect a sisterly affection too deep for mere words. Your attitude, as I came in at the gate, was typical of your position these months past.

"You have been standing alone : you have had to decide alone : this match did not please you ; you thought your sister was stepping outside her circle, but her manifest love for her lover has caused you to push aside your pride and give your consent with a sigh."

As he spoke the girl's fine eyes wavered and fell, her slightly trembling right hand unconsciously sought her father's shoulder, and at its light touch the old man looked up, smiled and resumed his reading again.

"Now, I have come to reassure you. I have come to prove to you that this young man is pure gold—the worthy mate of any girl. He is honest, steadfast, true-hearted and good-natured. I wish I could add that he is courageous—but how can I, when his admiration for his sister Kate is only equalled by his fear of her? I share the one feeling, but not the other, and, to prove it, here are the twenty-five pounds."

He placed the white notes on the white tablecloth before her, his eyes challenging a refusal. She sat there motionless and silent.

"I hear them making a move in the next

garden," he cried, "and they will be with us in a moment ! Conceal those notes quickly ! "

Awakened into life, the girl reached for the money, and thrust it out of sight among the folds of her white gown, a rush of colour obliterating the paleness which for some minutes had blanched her face. Without giving her time to rally he added cheerily :

" And please touch the bell again so that these evidences of my disgraceful hunger may be seen by no one but yourself."

Before the maid had quite finished clearing away the tea-things, the boundary-gate opened, and the two young people brought in Doctor Mead with them.

An arrangement was quickly arrived at, and so John Trumble became chauffeur to Doctor Mead, driving a measly little single-cylinder motor-car which he despised, but which his mechanical ingenuity soon tinkered into a speedy machine that began to attract the attention of the police.

V

Trumble proved a very efficient chauffeur, and gave Doctor Mead the greatest possible satisfaction. The doctor was a quiet, grave, elderly man with a very extensive practice—a large part of it, alas, in slums, from which no revenue was derived, yet which was not neglected on that account by the conscientious physician.

More and more he came to like the young man who sat by his side on the motor-car, and strangely enough one of the qualities he most admired in

him was his extreme caution, little dreaming that this careful mechanician was the person who had taken such risks to beat the Brighton express.

Often, during their visits to the slums, Trumble was called in to assist the doctor in some surgical case, and these visits to hopeless squalor turned his lordship toward a line of thought which had never occupied his mind before.

He found some difficulty in maintaining social relations with the Rectory, endeavouring, without success, to return to that state of confidential relationship with Miss Erroll which he had achieved on his first interview. When he ventured across the boundary line his reception was more apt to be frosty than cordial, but the icy demeanour wore thin, and once or twice broke away altogether.

Her general attitude toward him was one of reserve, not unmixed with vague fear, as was shown now and then by troubled glances which she bestowed on him.

His own demeanour was that of an easy-going man of the world, completely immune from any dislike of him she cared to show, and evidently without the slightest notion that a chauffeur at thirty shillings a week occupied about the lowest round of the social ladder.

All the doctor's praises of the young man merely emphasized his humble position, and she wondered at herself for permitting even an approach to friendliness, yet somehow it seemed quite natural when he was present.

Sometimes, when they were alone, he dared to make an audacious remark such as should only be permitted to persons on the footing of the greatest intimacy, and she always remembered afterward,

with burning cheeks, that she should have resented it at the time—which she had not done.

One afternoon he was rather astonished to find a note from her, asking him to call that evening at six. He found her alone, seated by the table in a secluded corner of the lawn. She seemed very radiant, as if something toward had happened.

She invited him almost joyfully to sit down, and when he had done so, raised her hand from the table and disclosed five golden sovereigns lying there. He had never seen her so animated before, and her smile, he admitted to himself, was intoxicating.

“The first of five payments, Mr. Trumble,” she said.

“I hope you have not been goading those two happy young people about this little debt, or do you intend to inaugurate a new order of things altogether?”

“What new order of things?”

“The repayment of a loan. I never knew of borrowed money being repaid before.”

“Why do you say a cynical thing like that? Don’t you repay money loaned to you?”

“I have never been able to borrow any,” replied Trumble with a laugh.

“I suppose,” she said, frowning a little, “that it was your acquaintance with the Earl of Watermead which taught you to scoff at obligation.”

“I admit that I have thought of late that my association with his lordship has done me little good. Still, after all, even he is paying for his fun.”

“Yes, under compulsion of the court.”

“Well, Miss Erroll, he has always been rather generous to me, so I shall say nothing against him, except to wish him more sense in future. But as

to this loan of mine, I don't at all need the money. I'm actually saving money at the present moment."

"What, on thirty shillings a week?"

"Oh, it's thirty-five. Didn't you know the doctor had raised me five shillings?"

"Please take the five pounds," she insisted, but he made no motion toward it.

"I don't like the method of payment."

"Do you wish it all at once?"

"No, I want it in daily instalments, and I ask permission to call and dun you each evening."

"Mr. Trumble," said Kate, "once or twice already you have ventured to make a remark of that nature. If you knew the displeasure with which I listen to such an observation, I am sure you are kind-hearted enough, and"—she paused, then took the plunge—"gentlemanly enough not to repeat the cause of offence."

"The offence, Miss Erroll, lies not in the words themselves, but in the person who spoke them. If a friend whom you liked, and whom you considered a social equal, told you it would give him pleasure to see you every day, you would not be offended, but pleased.

"When I gave you the money, of which the gold on the table is part repayment, I told you that your mind had been perturbed because of your sister's impending marriage, and you did not contradict me. I now tell you that your mind is perturbed because of your own."

"Of my own what?" cried the girl.

"Of your own impending marriage."

"Sir, you are talking nonsense!"

"No, I am not. You are saying to yourself, 'This man is impossible—impossible—impossible.'

You are perhaps quite right, having regard to his present position. That position deters me from making a formal proposal ; nevertheless, six months hence things will have changed, and I warn you, Kate, that I am going to marry you."

Since the time of the Medusa a look cannot petrify, so Miss Erroll abandoned the attempt, turned from him, and walked with dignity into the house. The maid told her later in the evening that she had found five sovereigns on the tea-table.

Three months after the announcement of bankruptcy the ten-days' sale of the Earl of Watermead's effects caused a great sensation in London, and money seemed to be very plentiful, for in many cases the prices paid were enormous.

The automobiles were to be disposed of on the tenth day of the sale. Trumble asked for the ninth day off, and received it ; whereupon, to the amazement of the aged Mr. Rolls, he walked into his solicitor's offices.

VI

It was an alert, business-like young man who called upon Mr. Rolls, and the man of law had some difficulty in recognizing this as the same person, languid and bored, who had left that room three months before with a hundred pounds in his pocket.

"How long am I to be in pawn, Rolls ?" he asked briskly.

"Well, your lordship, the sale has turned out so unexpectedly good that, with the letting of Watermead, I think——"

“ Letting Watermead ? To whom are you thinking of letting Watermead ? ”

“ Sir William Dillow.”

“ What, that bounder ? I’ll never allow Watermead to be contaminated by him, even for a week ! ”

“ I’m afraid, my lord, negotiations have gone too far and, if you will pardon me for saying so, you have really nothing to do about it until the debts are paid.”

“ How far short will the proceeds of the sale leave us ? ”

“ That I can’t say until to-morrow night. If the automobiles go as well as the other things, I think we’ll come out about even.”

“ Oh, it was regarding the automobile sale I wished to see you. ! I want you to bid in that Brusier-Grolier.”

“ I’ll see to that, my lord.”

“ And remember, Dillow doesn’t get Watermead.”

“ I’ll do what I can, my lord,” said Mr. Rolls, who was in more cheerful humour than when the Earl had last seen him.

When the young man returned to South London he said to Doctor Mead :

“ Wouldn’t you like to have an automobile that would carry four or five, so that you might take your friends out now and then if you wished to do so ? ”

“ I have often thought of it,” replied the doctor.

“ I’ve spent to-day in looking round, and have found a man who owns a car several sizes too large for him, which he is quite willing to exchange for this little single-cylinder of yours.”

“ How much money does he want in addition ? ”

“ He will trade even, I think.”

So the ineffective single-cylinder machine disappeared, and the magnificent King of the Road came in its place, the innocent, unworldly doctor saying calmly, as he walked round it, that although it was a little large, he nevertheless believed that John had made a very good bargain.

From Miss Kate Erroll a formal letter came to the young man containing a five-pound note. He returned it in a communication almost equally formal, saying that the lending of the money had been a friendly, not a business, transaction. Unless, therefore, the repayments could be made on a friendly, not a business, basis, he refused to receive them, and was hers very truly, John Trumble.

To this there was no reply. A week later the doctor said to his chauffeur :

"The missis and I think of taking an afternoon off to-morrow in the new automobile, and Miss Erroll has kindly consented to accompany us."

"That will be very pleasant," said Trumble, "and I shall see that the machine is in perfect order."

Next day, after lunch, the big motor-car was in readiness. Doctor and chauffeur wore appalling goggles, and the ladies were heavily veiled.

"Would you like to sit with Mrs. Mead, my dear, while I sit beside our excellent driver, whom we must humour to-day, for our lives are in his hands?"

Before she could reply the chauffeur who was to be humoured spoke up :

"It would be better if you took your usual place behind, doctor. I am responsible for the balance of the machine, you know. Miss Erroll will sit beside me."

"Oh, very well!" said the doctor, and Miss

Erroll, making no audible objection—how could she when she was the invited guest?—took her place beside John Trumble.

“Where to, Doctor Mead?” he asked.

“Anywhere you like, John. Get out into some quiet country road, and not too fast, remember.”

John threaded his way very cautiously through suburban thoroughfares until he reached the country road that led to Watermead, where they bowled along at a rate close on twenty miles an hour. Miss Erroll kept a rigid silence, but once out in the country John turned to her brightly, and said:

“You may speak to the man at the wheel, you know. It isn’t prohibited as is the case on board ship.”

“Really,” she replied, with a little laugh, “I thought the automobile needed all your attention.”

“Oh, not a tenth part of it!”

“It is very pleasant. Is this as fast as the car will go?”

“Not quite. But I dare not put on full speed. I am under the doctor’s orders, you know, as if I were an invalid.”

Miss Erroll laughed and the conversation was broken by a deep-toned “*Honk!*” to the rear.

Trumble cast a look over his shoulder, and his frame seemed to stiffen. He recognized the great Hardpan of Sir William Dillow. A professional chauffeur sat in the steering seat; Sir William and Dolly Carmichael in the tonneau. “*Honk! Honk!*”

“I think, John,” said the doctor timorously, “that motor-car behind us wants to pass.”

“Very good, sir; I’ll give them all the road they require,” replied John grimly.

"I'm sure he wants to pass, John," cried the doctor nervously.

"I'm sure he does, too, sir," replied Trumble.

The motor-car was purring like a great cat, yet nevertheless the other overhauled her. The big, polished, shimmering brass lamps of the Hardpan came abreast the tonneau of the Brusier-Grolier.

"*Honk, honk, honk, honk!*" cried the Hardpan, for the road was none too wide. The deep bass voice of Sir William roared forth almost like his fog-horn.

"Hang it all, Lavier, why don't you get out of this dust? Pass them, man!"

"That's a Brusier-Grolier, my lord," said the man over his shoulder.

"Bruise it, then. Put on everything you've got!" demanded the baronet.

"Stop, John!" commanded the doctor; "Stop and let them pass! You're going too fast: we'll have a smash in a minute."

"Yes, sir, I'm doing my best," said John, bending his head.

"*Honk, honk!*"

"Are you going to let them pass?" asked Kate in a thrilling whisper.

"What! With you beside me? Not likely! We've had enough of this fooling; now we'll show them why our number is fastened to the tail of the tonneau."

"Bravo!" said the girl, and for a moment her hand touched his arm.

"*Honk, honk, honk!*" cried the Hardpan.

"*Boom, boom, boom!*" replied the Brusier-Grolier.

Hitherto it had been purring like a cat, now the

sound increased and intensified until it resembled the roar of a tiger. There was no jerk or leap forward, but a glorious steady increase that seemed to promise an infinity of reserve force in store.

Hedges and fields flew past, and the strength of the blast pressed back into the doctor's mouth his unspoken words of alarm and caution. Great gates in front stood temptingly open, and slowing down, John passed through them and brought his car to a standstill.

The man at the lodge touched his cap. John slipped off his goggles, and the man almost jumped out of his boots, but before he could speak Trumble commanded :

"Close these gates ! Bolt and lock them. Bolt the small gate, too. Let no one inside without my permission. Send down word to that effect to the other entrances." And before the man could reply the automobile was tearing up the noble avenue until it stopped in front of the great house. Here were preparations for tea on the terrace. An old woman came out to them.

"Is this Sir William Dillow ? " she asked.

"No, Mrs. Standish. Tea for four on the terrace as soon as possible."

"Oh, my lord ! Welcome home, my lord ! "

"There, there, Mrs. Standish, run away to see to the tea ! "

The man from the gates came whirling up on a bicycle.

"Sir William Dillow's there, my lord, and says he has a permit."

"You tell Sir William to go to—the next village, where he'll find excellent accommodation at the Red Lion," said Trumble.

Kate Erroll had raised her veil, and was looking intently at the chauffeur.

“What does all this ‘my-lording,’ mean, Mr. Trumble?”

“It means, my dear, that John Trumble, Seventh Earl of Watermead, has still enough influence here to order tea for his friends. It means that to-day we are taking nobody’s dust. It means that Watermead House hopes to please the future Countess.”

MILLS & BOON are Publishing

I. A. R. WYLIE'S

REMARKABLE NOVEL

Brodie and the Deep Sea

Brodie and the Deep Sea

Brodie and the Deep Sea

Brodie and the Deep Sea

is the successor to this notable novelist's "**TO-
WARDS MORNING,**" a novel which enjoyed
remarkable success two years ago.

Brodie and the Deep Sea

is an after-war story of new ideals, new beliefs and new conditions. The characters are the people of all classes who have been born anew in the five years of struggle and who have come back to a chaotic world in which the old landmarks are being swept away.

At all Booksellers and Libraries
7s. 6d. Net

MILLS & BOON, Ltd., 49 Rupert Street, London, W.1.

JOAN SUTHERLAND'S NOVELS

Cloth 2s. net each.

Postage 4d.

In the Night

(The novel of Cyril Harcourt's great play.)

Fettered (Cophetua's Son)

Daily Mail.—"A vivid tale."

Scotsman.—"Grips the reader's attention. Produces quite a thrill."

The Hidden Road

Morning Post.—"A story of great adventure well and originally told. A warm and interesting piece of writing."

Beyond the Shadow

"A modern love story told in the author's best style."

The Dawn

The Edge of Empire

Dundee Courier.—"Splendid, a most enjoyable novel."

The Locust

Outlook.—"An interesting book all through."

Sheffield Telegraph.—"A strong love interest holds the attention."

MILLS & BOON, Ltd., 49 Rupert Street, London, W.1.

JACK LONDON'S BOOKS

"He opened windows for them upon the splendour and the savagery, the pomp and the pitifulness that he had found in many corners of the earth. He saw that in every scene, in every human activity there was an element which lifted it into the region of the beautiful, and he made all his readers see it, whether they were learned or ignorant; cultivated or only just able to read. Full justice has never been done to him. There was no silver in his purse, only gold."—Hamilton Fyfe in "The Daily Mail."

ISLAND TALES	7s. net
SMOKE AND SHORTY	6s. net
THE HUMAN DRIFT	6s. net
THE VALLEY OF THE MOON	6s. net and 2s. 6d. net
REVOLUTION	2s. net
WAR OF THE CLASSES	2s. net
THE RED ONE	6s. net
HEARTS OF THREE	6s. net and 2s. net
MICHAEL, BROTHER OF JERRY	6s. net and 2s. net
JERRY OF THE ISLANDS	6s. net and 2s. net
THE ACORN-PLANTER	3s. 6d. net
TURTLES OF TASMAN	1s. 6d. net
THE STRENGTH OF THE STRONG	6s. net and 1s. 6d. net
THE NIGHT-BORN	6s. net and 2s. net
THE LITTLE LADY OF THE BIG HOUSE	6s. net and 2s. net
THE JACKET	6s. net and 2s. net
JOHN BARLEYCORN	6s. net and 2s. net
BEFORE ADAM	1s. 6d. net
THE SCARLET PLAGUE	1s. 6d. net
THE GOD OF HIS FATHERS	1s. 6d. net
THE IRON HEEL	2s. net
THE MUTINY OF THE ELSINORE	6s. net and 2s. net
ADVENTURE	2s. net
THE CRUISE OF THE SNARK	2s. net
THE CRUISE OF THE DAZZLER	1s. 6d. net
LOST FACE	6s. net and 1s. 6d. net
SOUTH SEA TALES	6s. net and 1s. 6d. net
WHEN GOD LAUGHS	6s. net and 1s. 6d. net
THE ROAD	1s. 6d. net
THE HOUSE OF PRIDE	1s. 6d. net
LOVE OF LIFE	1s. 6d. net
A SON OF THE SUN	6s. net and 2s. net
SMOKE BELLEW	6s. net and 1s. 6d. net
AN ODYSSEY OF THE NORTH	1s. 6d. net
CHILDREN OF THE FROST	1s. 6d. net

MILLS & BOON, Ltd., 49 Rupert Street, London, W.1

NOVELS BY VICTOR BRIDGES

THE MAN FROM NOWHERE.

2s. net.

Daily Mail.—"A rattling good story, full of high adventure, good spirits, buoyant health and humour."

Morning Post.—"Mr. Victor Bridges has written a rattling good yarn, written it with a vigour and resource that never desert him from the beginning to the end."

THE CRUISE OF THE "SCANDAL."

2s. net.

The Times.—"Mr. Bridges goes far. He has made us shake our sides with his fun, and hold our breath from sheer suspense."

THE LADY FROM LONG ACRE.

6s. net and 2s. net.

The Times.—"Told with unflinching vivacity."

Daily Graphic.—"A spirited story, with a generous supply of sparkling dialogue and lively incident."

Yorkshire Post.—"More exciting adventure, told with more spirit and humour it would be hard to find."

MR. LYNDON AT LIBERTY.

2s. net.

Pall Mall Gazette.—"Pulsates with life from cover to cover."

The Times.—"A really capital sensational story."

Punch.—"He whizzes along at a magnificent speed."

MILLS & BOON, Ltd., 49 Rupert St., London, W.1

HAROLD BEGBIE'S NOVELS.

THE DUCHESS, THE ARTIST AND THE PICTURE BOOK. 2s. net.

Standard : "A strong vivid story without a single dull page."

Daily Chronicle : "A story of sweetness and light."

A LONDON GIRL. Cloth, 2s. net; and Paper, 1s. 6d. net.

The BISHOP OF LONDON, addressing a meeting at the Northampton Institute, Finsbury, said : "I have lately been reading a story which interested and impressed me very much indeed. All you men ought to read it. It was called 'A London Girl.' The picture painted in it made a great impression on me because I know from my own experience in rescue and preventive work that the story is literally true. It is the story of the downfall of hundreds of our girls in London to-day. The pitiful tale is not overdrawn; it is all too true."

Dundee Advertiser : "Certain it is that the author of this pitiless tale is neither ordinary nor inexperienced. 'Baby' is a great creation. She leaps from the printed page into lovely, merry life, and all through she exercises a spell over one."

CLOSED DOORS. Paper, 1s. 6d. net.

Sheffield Telegraph : "He writes with a purpose. He conceals nothing; his strongest passages are absolutely true to life; but the influence of the book is wholly elevating."

British Weekly : "The work of a writer of unusual talent."

Westminster Gazette : "It is a very strong and vivid story of an extremely painful subject. . . . The theme is so well handled that we cannot but regret the somewhat compressed treatment."

Pall Mall Gazette : "The book compels admiration, and its sombre tone does not lower its interest."

Review of Reviews : "It is realism, but realism of a high order, and not of the gutter. . . . It is a powerful and convincing tale of the underside of human life."

THE RAINY DAY. Paper, 1s. 6d. net.

The *Morning Post* says : "In style it suggests sometimes the Russian realistic novelists; in plan it is obviously inspired by Zola; in spirit it has some of the illuminating instinct of Balzac. As a work of art it is a notable achievement. As a social document it deserves the attention of all serious students of contemporary conditions of life. It is a book that should on no account be overlooked."

MILLS & BOON, Ltd., 49 Rupert Street, London, W.1

LOUISE GERARD'S NOVELS.

THE WITCH CHILD

6s. net and 2s. net.

"One of the best romances of the year."—*To-Day*.

DAYS OF PROBATION

2s. net.

"All about hospital life. Full of vivacity."

LIFE'S SHADOW SHOW

2s. net.

"A very able novel written with much vigour and undeniable charm . . . Miss Gerard's best novel."

FLOWER-OF-THE-MOON

2s. net.

"A dainty romance."—*Times*.

THE VIRGIN'S TREASURE

2s. net.

"A story of unusual interest."—*Sunday Times*.

A TROPICAL TANGLE

2s. net.

"Having taken up the book we found ourselves loth to lay it aside until we had turned the last page."—*Liverpool Post*.

WAVES OF CIRCUMSTANCE

2s. net.

"A very pleasant companion,"—*Morning Post*.

THE MYSTERY OF GOLDEN LOTUS

6s. net.

"She again goes to equatorial Africa for her scene of a story which has freshness as well as ingenuity."—*Yorkshire Post*.

A SPANISH VENDETTA

7s. 6d. net.

MILLS & BOON, Ltd., 49 Rupert St., London, W.1.

LOVED BY CHILDREN

The Ponting Fairy Books.

2s. 6d. net each volume.

CHARMING and ORIGINAL

MILLS & BOON are issuing a series of delightful children's books by CLARENCE and ALICE PONTING. The pictures taken by an expert photographer are probably the most original which have yet appeared, and the Fairy Stories are certain to charm the juvenile mind. The volumes have a coloured picture wrapper and are most artistically produced, with eight illustrations of the rarest photographic kind. The first four volumes will be

The Gnome's Treasure

The Land of Nursery Rhymes

The Riddle of the Wood

The River of Dreams

Please ask your Bookseller to show you these charming books.

THE CADBY BOOKS

By CARINE CADBY

With illustrations from photographs by Will Cadby

3s. net each volume.

TOPSY AND TURVY. With 40 illus.

THE DOLLS' DAY. With 29 illustrations

FINDING A FAIRY. With 32 illustrations

PUPPIES AND KITTENS. With 39 illus.

MILLS & BOON, Ltd., 49 Rupert Street, London, W.1

Some Additions to Mills & Boon's List

The Problem of Nervous Breakdown. By Edwin L. Ash, M.D. Author of "Mental Self Help." Demy 8vo. 10s. 6d. net.

"Hush," or the Hydrophone Service. By H. W. Wilson, late Lieut. R.N.V.R., with 45 illustrations from photographs. Demy 8vo. 8s. 6d. net.

The Wonderful Village. By Reginald Blunt, with 24 illustrations. Crown 8vo. Second Edition. 8s. 6d. net.

Sam Darling's Reminiscences. Cheaper Edition. With 9 illustrations. Crown 8vo. 6s. net.

Biffin and his Circle. By Harry Graham. Illustrated. Crown 8vo. 7s. net.

Lord Bellinger. By Harry Graham. Revised Edition. Fcap. 8vo. 3s. 6d. net.

The Bolster Book. By Harry Graham. Revised Edition. Fcap. 8vo. 3s. 6d. net.

The Human Drift. By Jack London. Crown 8vo. 6s. net.

The Acorn Planter : A Californian Forest Play. By Jack London. 12mo. 3s. 6d. net.

The Mayflower. A Play of the Pilgrim Fathers. By W. Edward Stirling and Alfred Hayes, with a foreword by Dr. Rendel Harris. Crown 8vo. 2s. 6d. net.

Life without Money. By the author of "Life without Servants." 2s. 6d. net.

MILLS & BOON, Ltd., 49 Rupert Street, London, W.1



